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An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue in Environmental Decision-making.

Samuel John Gardner

Department of Geography
University College London.

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ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

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Abstract

Stakeholder participation is recognised as an important component of sustainable environmental decision-making. This understanding is supported by an 'idealised narrative' of benefits and predictions that describes stakeholder participation as delivering both transformative and substantive products. However, the relationship between the participatory process and products is poorly understood and has rarely been examined. As a result, the momentum behind the current rise in use of stakeholder participation methods is fuelled by a number of insufficiently tested normative statements. This thesis addresses this situation by exploring the effectiveness of stakeholder participation.

The academic context to this evaluation reviews the arguments for participation in public policy found within the political science, natural resource management, and planning literatures. In particular, it draws on the theory of collaborative planning and the recent emergence of a parallel critical debate that identifies the challenges to effective stakeholder participation. Framed by this context, the empirical focus of this study is based on a particular participatory process called Stakeholder Dialogue. In order to establish a measure of effectiveness that goes beyond describing results and identifies potential explanations for the products of Stakeholder Dialogue the thesis develops an original evaluation strategy based around a retrospective case study methodology.

The evaluation uncovers a complex picture of relationships which challenges the notion that alongside the successful production of a substantive product, an inclusive, transparent and deliberative process will also deliver a broad set of transformative benefits. At the heart of this complexity lies the interface between the multifaceted and pervasive influence of context, in particular its influence on the expectations and interests of stakeholders, and the notions of deliberation and inclusion that define participatory practice. Failure to address this complexity is compounded by the instrumental purpose behind environmental policy; together these themes frustrate the delivery of comparable benefits to all participants.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to an evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue

Introduction

Within the UK, stakeholder participation has become an established feature of environmental decision-making processes. This current position of prominence is supported by an "idealised narrative" (Conley & Moote 2003:372) that emphasises the potential of participatory processes to deliver transformative and substantive benefits. However, although the relationship between the process and products is recognised as being complex (Chess and Purcell 1999, Clark *et al* 2001, Innes and Booher 1999), it has rarely been examined and remains poorly understood (Beierle & Konisky 2001, Beierle and Konisky 2000, Bloomfield *et al.* 2001, Owens and Cowell 2002). This situation has two important implications. Firstly, the momentum and expectations behind the current rise in the use of stakeholder participation methods are fuelled by a number of insufficiently tested claims. Secondly, the application of stakeholder participation lacks the necessary critical understanding to ensure effective implementation. This thesis addresses this situation by developing an original evaluation strategy that explores the effectiveness of stakeholder participation.

The empirical focus of the thesis centres on a particular interpretation of participatory decision-making known as Stakeholder Dialogue. At the same time, the thesis develops an original framework of participation that locates Stakeholder Dialogue on three dimensions common to all participatory processes, and in doing so, ensures the evaluation offers wider learning for the current participatory turn in public policy processes.

This introductory chapter is organised into four sections. The first of these introduces the context that frames this research, the second builds on this description to offer a research rationale. Following this the chapter sets out the research aims, and concludes by describing how the thesis is structured.

1.1 Research Context

Although we have only incomplete, and increasingly out of date, descriptions of the extent of current participatory practice (Lowndes *et al.* 1998 and Tuxworth 2000), there is considerable evidence to suggest that participatory techniques have become an established component of environmental decision-making processes. The enthusiastic adoption of participatory processes is an important feature of the context surrounding this research. Encouraged by what has largely been a positive research agenda (Bickerstaff *et al.* 2002) and perhaps more importantly, by a sympathetic political environment, (Mason 1999, Wilson 1999), the last seven years have seen a steady increase in the development and application of participatory techniques (see for instance Kass 2001, NEF 1998, Warburton 1997). Hidden behind this rise in participatory practice are important secondary features of context that shape the research environment. Firstly, there is considerable ambiguity surrounding the language of participation (DETR 1998a, Keim 1975, Sewell & Phillips 1979, Steelman & Ascher 1997) and secondly, there is only limited critical appreciation of the role participation can play. Buoyed by this potential for interpretation, the absence of any common critical understanding and the support of central government, it is easy to see the scope for considerable variation in participatory practice.

Explanations for the popularity that participatory practice currently enjoys can be traced back to a common understanding that it has the "potential to improve the process *and* quality of decisions made" (Harding 1998:111, see also Buchy & Hoverman 2000, Jackson 2001, McAllister 1999, Rydin & Pennington 2000, Warburton 1997). This is an attractive claim when set alongside the challenges of contemporary decision-making in complex, pluralistic western societies that are increasingly characterised by political apathy and a "crisis of legitimacy" in the role of public institutions (Pimbert & Wakeford 2001:23, Mason 1999). Fiorino (1990) provides a critique of traditional technocratic decision processes that draws on the description of participation as both a means to an end and an end in itself to offer a comprehensive explanation for the emergence of the current participatory turn in public planning and policy. He presents two arguments that describe the substantive and instrumental value the participatory approach brings to the final decision, and a third, normative argument, that emphasises

the democratic value of the process itself. This case for greater participation makes an ambitious claim: that participation is the key not only to greater legitimacy in decision-making but also to the production of better decisions, via a process that educates and engenders citizenship amongst participants (Beetham 1992, Pateman 1970, Pellizzoni 2001, Sanderson 1999, Verba & Nie 1972).

Despite these commonly recognised benefits and the political support for participatory decision-making, there is no single accepted means of ensuring effective public participation. This is not to suggest there is a scarcity of methods; indeed there are numerous different approaches that to varying degrees embrace principles of inclusion, transparency, deliberation and reflective analysis. Fuelled by the ambiguities surrounding the meaning of terms such as participation and inclusion, and by the various demands of different contexts, participatory practice has developed over thirty-five different techniques (see Holmes and Scoones 2000 and NEF 1998). Although this number hides considerable replication, as well as variability with regard to 'levels of participation', there is a consistent aim across the different processes to "democratise democracy" (Bloomfield *et al.* 2001:501). It is possible to organise the various different participatory processes according to where they fall on 'ladders' that describe, for example, delegation of power or direction of communication. However, the simplest distinction to be made among them is that between public participatory techniques and a subset of these that focuses exclusively on stakeholder involvement. The Environment Council, for example define a stakeholder as "a person or institution having a stake in the outcome of a situation or decision" (Acland 2000:6), and a similar definition is offered by Healey (1998:3). Processes such as Citizen's Juries select participants from the general public using a strategy designed to mirror the demographic makeup of the population at large. This contrasts with stakeholder processes, such as Stakeholder Dialogue, which seek to engage with an inclusive range of individuals and organisations representing interests relevant to the decision topic.

The conceptual foundations of current participatory practice can be traced back to a number of distinct yet sympathetic theoretical literatures. Those techniques that emphasise consensus building and conflict resolution have ties to the Alternative Dispute Resolution literature and the ideas of Principled Negotiation (see for instance Acland 1995, Fisher & Ury 1981). Others stress the democratic rationale behind

participatory processes and as such build on the arguments within the Deliberative Democracy literature (Beetham 1992, Bohman & Rehg 1997, Dahl 1989, Parry 1972, Pateman 1970). A third, though not exclusive, group of processes emphasises the value of deliberation and has its conceptual foundations in the writings of Jurgen Habermas and the emancipatory notion of communicative rationality (Habermas 1984). Few participatory practices make these conceptual links explicit; indeed there are no exclusive associations as there is a common thread to all three literatures that shapes the development and implementation of innovative participatory techniques. In each case, the notion of aggregated preferences is rejected in favour of an inclusive process that favours no particular specialist knowledge and seeks to establish a common understanding across participants through a reasoned dialogue.

Although participatory processes have been adopted across policy sectors it is perhaps within the environmental field that they have found greatest appeal (Berkhout *et al.* 2003, Lafferty and Meadowcroft 1996, Munton 2003, van de Hove 2000). Environmental issues are characterised by their complexity and uncertainties; in addition to which, established specialist knowledges confront local experiential understandings, and contrasting value sets are brought together around issues that ignore existing institutional and organisational scales and operate over extended time frames. It is now widely accepted that such issues cannot be resolved through automatic recourse to scientific knowledge (Burgess 2000). There is a growing recognition that, if this situation is to be progressed, any decision-making process should not only engage with those it might impact upon, but also acknowledge that local observations and experiences must be taken into account if the decision is to be appropriate and implementable. Participatory processes, shaped by principles of transparency, inclusion and deliberation, seem to provide a suitable decision-making environment that responds to the challenges of the environmental context. The emergence of sustainable development as the dominant narrative of environmental policy provides an additional explanation for the current momentum behind the use of participatory processes. Its requirement that environmental concerns are integrated with economic and social issues emphasises the value of an inclusive participatory process, while at the same time the contested nature of sustainability demands a deliberative process (Owens & Cowell 2002). New Labour's commitment to the Local Agenda 21 process (Mason 1999) and the emphasis it places on community participation has

further advanced the position of participatory techniques within environmental decision-making contexts.

At the same time as participatory practices have become established features of environmental decision-making, recognised by national agencies (Delbridge *et al.* 2002, EN 2002), government guidance (DETR 1998a) and European Directives (2003/4/EC, Palerm 1999), an emerging critique has developed that identifies and challenges a number of the assumptions within deliberative and inclusionary processes. Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger (1998) suggest that the communicative act is susceptible to manipulation by participants who adopt strategic tactics; they also question the presumption that the transformative strength of a participatory process is sufficient to equalise established power bases. Others have described the inadequate consideration of context and highlighted the poorly tested, yet widely asserted, links between process and products (Conley & Moote 2003, Owens & Cowell 2002). Yet others, (for example Owens & Cowell 2002 and Phelps & Tewdwr-Jones 2000) have challenged the principle behind most participatory practices that the "involvement of the greatest number of people is a particular imperative for the success of sustainable development" (Rackham & Mitchell 2000:114). Although these intellectual challenges to the academic case for deliberative and inclusionary processes have suffered from a lack of empirical evidence, there are examples that have highlighted the shortcomings of existing participatory practice. For instance Bickerstaff & Walker (2001:433) concluded, "the experience of recent participatory initiatives has started to raise questions about the process, outcome and wider institutional context of public involvement".

It is apparent from simply introducing this emergent debate that participatory practice risks stumbling over its own momentum and potentially failing to fulfil its considerable potential. It is in this dynamic context that this research situates itself.

1.1.1 Introducing The Environment Council and Stakeholder Dialogue

The empirical focus of this thesis is a particular participatory process known as Stakeholder Dialogue. Developed by The Environment Council (TEC), a charity, in

response to the environmental debates of the 1980's, Stakeholder Dialogue is described as a "designed and facilitated process involving stakeholders" (Acland 2000:6). Although this definition does little to separate Stakeholder Dialogue from many other participatory processes it is possible to draw out some distinguishing features from The Environment Council literature. Principal among these is the emphasis given to the notions of stakeholder inclusion and deliberation. The process seeks to establish a shared agreement across the broadest range of relevant interests via a process of facilitated two-way communication (Acland *et al.* 1999, Acland 2000). This approach is built on a principle of equality amongst participants that is in turn operationalised by adopting a flat decision-making structure intended to offer all individuals an equal opportunity to shape the products. The Environment Council have developed and applied Stakeholder Dialogue over a period of approximately eleven years, and in doing so have built up a significant body of practical expertise in the use of participatory decision-making tools. First applied in 1993 as means of developing an agreed management plan for powerboats on Lake Windermere in the Lake District, Stakeholder Dialogue has been used by The Environment Council in a range of environmental contexts. In this time the organisation has grown to its present size of 30 members of staff, supported by a network of approximately fifteen independent facilitators.

The practice of Stakeholder Dialogue, as it has been developed and implemented by The Environment Council, provides an interesting and suitable focus for this attempt to evaluate the benefits of stakeholder participation. There are a number of reasons why Stakeholder Dialogue stands out. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, The Environment Council provides a supportive organisational context for the research. For an evaluation to select an appropriate case and establish a true assessment of its effectiveness it must have access to the convenor, the facilitation team and the literature associated with each case. The Environment Council were happy to provide all of this. Secondly, the established history of Stakeholder Dialogue means that the evaluation strategy was able to apply its case selection criteria to an extensive archive of historical cases. This helped to ensure the evaluation focused on a fair but challenging example of Stakeholder Dialogue. At the same time, The Environment Council literature provides an accurate description of how Stakeholder Dialogue has developed over the years. This developmental history makes an important contribution to the evaluation, allowing it to address the underlying aims and rationale behind the participatory process. The

Environment Council's position as the leading practitioner of participatory practices within the environment sector means it is probably the only organisation able to offer this historical picture of process development.

Still at a practical level, the third reason for focusing on Stakeholder Dialogue is the experience and knowledge of the facilitators. Access to the facilitators meant the evaluation was able to develop criteria that reflected an accurate understanding of practice and the associated benefits. The evaluation was also able to draw on the expertise of key individuals who have been instrumental in the development of the process and remain active within The Environment Council.

Fourthly, the selection of Stakeholder Dialogue provides an excellent opportunity to contribute to the wider understanding of participatory practices. Although Stakeholder Dialogue represents a particular approach to participatory decision-making its defining principles of inclusion and dialogue are common to many other processes, so much so that the term 'Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes' (DIPS), has been coined by some to capture the various different methods (Bloomfield *et al.* 2001, Munton 2003, O'Riordan *et al.* 1999). In addition to providing a valuable point of reference for future evaluations of other participatory techniques, Stakeholder Dialogue's grounding in a common set of principles allows the evaluation to respond to the emerging debates introduced above. For instance, it provides an appropriate test for the assumption that "collaborative forms of governance are likely to be at their most effective when they are inclusive of all interests" (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones 2000:114). Also important is the fact that the arguments The Environment Council present to support the use of Stakeholder Dialogue reflect the established expectation that effective participation will deliver both substantive and transformative benefits. By making this case, The Environment Council ensures that an evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue is able to address the claim at the heart of the current interest in participatory decision-making.

The practical value of this evaluation for The Environment Council is recognised by their collaboration with UCL and the agreement to jointly supervise the research through an ESRC CASE Studentship (Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering). The purpose of such a Studentship is to instruct the development of a research program that addresses the existing academic context while also responding to

the learning needs of the sponsoring organisation. Reflecting The Environment Council's support for the thesis, the research is centred on an assessment of Stakeholder Dialogue and the identification of those factors that determine its effectiveness. The thesis is then able to draw on the results of the empirical research to contribute to current academic debates. Although the CASE Award provides the research with opportunities and access to resources it also means it has to satisfy two quite separate audiences. For evaluation research this can present particular challenges. An evaluation methodology must be designed so it is able to answer the questions posed by its audience; if there are multiple audiences with contrasting questions, as there are in the case of this thesis, then the evaluation must adopt an innovative methodology that can address both sets of questions.

1.2 Research rationale

The research focus of this thesis responds to the limited empirical examination of stakeholder participation. By developing an innovative evaluation strategy the thesis seeks to address this absence and question the basis for the current "considerable optimism" (Beierle & Konisky 2000) surrounding participation. At the same time the study provides a means of developing future participatory processes while also offering an empirical response to an emerging theoretical critique.

The challenges and costs associated with evaluation have meant that the development of participatory practice has been largely free of empirical scrutiny (Beierle & Konisky 2001, Bloomfield *et al.* 2001, Chess 2000, Oakley 1991, Santos & Chess 2003 and Smith & Wales 2000). Attempts that have been made to establish frameworks for evaluation, most notably by Renn *et al.* (1995), have tended to focus on features of process and have neglected to test the predicted links between participation and products (see also Halvorsen 2001, Petts 2001, Rowe & Frewer 2000). Taken on its own, this is a potentially damaging situation as it offers little opportunity to identify the influential links between process, context and products. This is all the more true in the current policy climate where participation is applied across policy sectors on the apparent assumption that the different contexts do not impact on process effectiveness. If participatory processes are to survive as an established feature of policy making then

they must not only understand the role of context, but also provide participants with sufficient benefits for them to be willing to participate again in the future. For this to happen there must be an accurate picture of how the process creates the products described by participants. This thesis addresses the pressing need to evaluate the consequences of participation (Innes & Booher 1999).

While a contextually rich evaluation strategy offers a means of exploring process effectiveness, it also ensures the thesis is able to contribute to what is an ongoing search for a "better match between the choice of stakeholder process and the problem it is attempting to solve" (Yosie & Herbst 1998:2). Although this idea of 'Fitness for Purpose' has become a key theme within participatory practice (see Studd 2003), it remains an elusive and problematic concept (Crow *et al.* 2000). By developing an original framework that describes the influence of three dimensions common to all participatory processes - power, participants and purpose - on the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue, the evaluation offers an empirical benchmark that can help to ensure future participatory processes offer improved Fitness for Purpose.

In keeping with the nature of the CASE Studentship the research incorporates a practical analysis that responds to the growing need for improvements to practice. The limited assessment of participatory processes, particularly in the case of Stakeholder Dialogue, means there is a similarly limited opportunity for practice-focused learning and the improvement of participatory techniques. Rather than being able to draw on independent evaluations, participatory techniques tend to evolve 'on the hoof' as practitioners learn from their experiences. Without independent evaluation there is the risk that poor features of practice become embedded in the facilitators' 'toolkits' of techniques.

As support for participatory decision-making continues to grow across the environmental sector the academic literature has begun to identify emerging tensions and challenges to the effective implementation of participatory processes. While this debate is perhaps most established within the planning literature (see for instance, Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones 2002, Hibbard & Lurie 2000, Margerum 2002, Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998), it is also to be found within the development literature (Cooke & Kothari 2001), the natural resource management literature

(Goodwin 1998a, 1998b, 1999) and the political science literature (O'Neil 2000, Sanderson 1999). This thesis offers a means of making an empirical contribution to this debate and at the same time reinvigorating the academic pursuit of a democratic alternative to established technocratic decision-processes. Recent critical analysis has threatened to frustrate this intellectual goal, a situation alluded to by Campbell and Fainstein (2003:10) who suggest that the notion of communicative action has perhaps lost "some of its early thunder", and "despite the best efforts of its advocates....has not gained mass appeal". By addressing the questions raised by the critical literature this thesis can describe a way for deliberative decision-making to successfully evolve out of this period of critical examination.

Current participatory practice has evolved in the absence of an established body of evaluation literature (Oakley 1991), and without an accepted understanding of the methodological strengths and weaknesses of different evaluation practices. If participatory decision-making is to continue to establish itself as an accepted component of environmental policy development then its assessment will need to be seen as rigorous and appropriate. For this to happen there must be sufficient resources and a better understanding of current methods of assessment, such as process evaluation and participatory evaluation. By developing an original evaluation strategy the thesis is able to provide a critical review of existing evaluation methods that can then be used to guide future assessment work.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The research focus of the thesis is shaped by the CASE Studentship and the emphasis it places on the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue. By drawing on this particular empirical focus the thesis is also able to contribute to the questions posed by the research context described above. A retrospective evaluation strategy provides the methodological framework for the research and ensures the thesis can identify the relationships between process, context and products.

A. The overarching aim of this study is to establish an **accurate understanding of the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue**. In order to achieve this aim the research seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What are the products of Stakeholder Dialogue?

This descriptive question identifies the basic data set for the evaluation. However, on its own, this set of results provides only the first step in determining and explaining processes effectiveness. The following two questions are necessary to complete the evaluation and identify the causal relationships behind the outputs and outcomes.

2. How do these results compare to the expected outcomes?

This question asks the evaluation to consider the results of the data collection process alongside the intended results predicted by The Environment Council and the wider participation literature. In addition to this, the question requires the evaluation to describe how the outputs and outcomes experienced by the participants differ from what they had expected on entering the Stakeholder Dialogue process. In order to do this the evaluation adopts a subject-centred approach that ensures it engages with the diversity of participants.

3. What determines the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue?

This exploratory question requires the evaluation to unpack the developmental processes behind products described by the different participants. In order to do this the influence of the process must be traced and separated from any impact the context has on the products. The evaluation must also be able to consider what role the purpose of the Stakeholder Dialogue example plays in determining its effectiveness.

4. What are the characteristics of the products of Stakeholder Dialogue?

For the evaluation to have real value it must be able not only to identify the products of Stakeholder Dialogue, but also to describe their characteristics. In particular it is important to gain some measure of the strengths of the outputs and outcomes. For instance, how long are they likely to last, or have they been tested? Given the reliance on representation it is also valuable to try to establish how transferable the benefits of participating are: can they be shared amongst a stakeholder's constituency or are they tied to the experience of participating?

In addition to the principal aim of evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue the thesis has a number of secondary aims. These aims are described below along with their associated research questions.

B. The thesis aims to provide a framework that will contribute to the existing critical understanding of participatory processes.

1. What dimensions are common to all participatory processes?

There have been numerous attempts to describe the variation in participatory processes in terms of where they fall on a particular scale. The majority of these 'ladders of participation' have concentrated on a single variable such as power (Arnstein 1969). This thesis seeks to establish a more complete picture by locating Stakeholder Dialogue within a 3-dimensional space defined by three variables common to all participatory processes.

2. How does the position of Stakeholder Dialogue within this framework determine the effectiveness of the approach?

By answering this question the thesis is able to set an instructive benchmark for the assessment of other participatory processes that fall elsewhere within the participatory space.

C. The thesis aims to progress the emerging critique regarding participatory approaches to decision-making by making an empirical contribution based on an evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue.

1. *To what extent does Stakeholder Dialogue effectively account for and engage with context?*
2. *To what extent does Stakeholder Dialogue elevate procedure over substance and what influence does this have over the products of the process?*
3. *To what extent does Stakeholder Dialogue address the individual motivations of the participants and how susceptible is the process to manipulation by participants?*

These three questions address a number of common critiques of participatory decision-making. Focusing on these questions ensures the thesis takes a holistic approach to

evaluation that examines, not only the internal mechanisms of the process, but also the influence of external contextual variables that impact on its effectiveness.

D. The thesis aims to develop an innovative evaluation strategy that makes an original contribution to current methods of assessing participatory processes.

1. What are the challenges of evaluating participatory practice?

Although there is a common understanding that participatory processes present a challenging focus for evaluation there is limited consensus as to what these challenges are.

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing evaluation practices?

Current evaluation methods are dominated by a focus on process assessment and the importance of adopting a participatory approach. This thesis provides a critical review of these methods and explores the assumptions within each.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 situates the research in its empirical and theoretical context. Chapter 3 develops an original framework of participation that defines Stakeholder Dialogue according to dimensions common to all participatory processes. Following this, it explores the practice and development of both The Environment Council as an organisation and Stakeholder Dialogue as a particular practice. Chapter 4 positions the research in its methodological context by reviewing current evaluation practice. Chapter 5 presents the evaluation strategy. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 introduce the case studies and present the results of the evaluation. Chapter 9 explores these results and relates them to both the theoretical arguments in Chapter 2 and the principles of Stakeholder Dialogue defined in Chapter 3. This chapter then concludes the thesis by identifying potentially valuable areas of future research. Throughout the thesis I use Summary Boxes to summarise and highlight key themes.

Chapter 2 provides the thesis with both a justification for the evaluation and a theoretical basis for assessment. It sets out a description of the current use of participatory process and explores the various explanations for its popularity. Building on this the chapter draws on a number of distinct, yet sympathetic, literatures to introduce the normative and practical arguments for participation. In particular the chapter addresses the case presented by the communicative planning literature. The chapter concludes by introducing the emerging critical debates.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of the principles and practices of Stakeholder Dialogue. In order to do this the chapter adopts two different approaches. The first situates Stakeholder Dialogue within an original framework of participation. The second draws on a range of literature to describe the development of both The Environment Council and Stakeholder Dialogue. This chapter addresses elements of Research Aim B.

Chapter 4 presents a critical review of the present state of evaluation research. This assessment provides the basis for the following chapter to develop an appropriate and original evaluation strategy. The chapter provides a comprehensive description of the challenges posed by the evaluation of participatory processes. Building on this the chapter describes the multiple competing epistemologies that underpin the various approaches to evaluation and the different evaluation strategies they dictate.

Chapter 5 draws on the three previous chapters to develop an evaluation strategy that allows the thesis to establish a true picture of the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue, while at the same time also having the potential to contribute to the academic debate regarding participatory decision-making. In order to achieve this the chapter builds on a 'paradigm of choices' to describe a retrospective case study evaluation strategy that adopts aspects of 'quasi-experimental' program evaluation. Chapters 4 and 5 address Research Aim D.

Chapter 6 introduces the principal case study, the Stakeholder Dialogue process that developed the Thanet Coast marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) management strategy. The emphasis of this chapter is on providing a rich description of the context surrounding the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The chapter organises the various

features of context according to the scale on which they operate. At the macro-scale the chapter explores the social and economic background of the area as well as the physical geography and recent history to the case. The chapter then focuses on what the thesis identifies as the micro-scale and describes those features of context that are intimately linked with the participatory process. In order to provide this picture the chapter draws on the results of over 30 in-depth interviews and supporting literature.

Chapter 7 offers an original presentation of the evaluation results from the Thanet case study. The chapter draws on the learning from the evaluation and traces the development of the products stakeholders describe. The first section of the chapter describes the variation in expectations, hopes and understandings of the different participants and highlights how these evolve. The second section then explores the participatory process and in particular how the context and process interact to determine how, and what, stakeholders contribute. These two sections provide the thesis with an explanation for both the different substantive products the process delivers and the variation in experiences amongst stakeholders. The chapter concludes by describing these substantive and transformative products and identifying the influential relationships between the two.

Chapter 8 focuses on the secondary case study of North Norfolk and the Wash marine SAC. This case does not present an example of Stakeholder Dialogue; instead it describes how an alternative participatory approach was used for the same purpose as the Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. The aim of this second case is to provide the evaluation strategy with an opportunity to gain a more complete understanding of how the two defining features of Stakeholder Dialogue, the presence of the facilitator and the flat decision-making structure, influenced the effectiveness of the Thanet case. The fact that the second case did not employ either of these features means it provides the evaluation strategy with an important second opportunity to add to the learning gleaned from the first. The chapter presents a detailed description of the context surrounding the second case before going on to explore the results of seventeen in-depth interviews. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 address elements of Research Aims A and C.

Chapter 9 builds on the learning set out in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 and relates it back to the themes introduced in Chapter 2 and 3. The first section of the chapter considers each of

the principles of Stakeholder Dialogue and, by drawing on the results in Chapter 7, describes how the tensions between them give rise to the products described by stakeholders. The second section of the chapter returns to the framework of participation introduced in Chapter 3 and describes how the position of Stakeholder Dialogue on the scales of power, purpose and participants determines its effectiveness. The third section of the chapter considers the emerging critiques of participation in light of the results of this empirical assessment. This Chapter addresses elements of Research Aims A, B and C.

Chapter 2
Building the case for evaluation

Introduction

In recent years stakeholder participation has become an established, if variable component of the environmental public policy process. It has been seized upon as the means of delivering 'better' policies, greater efficiency, strengthened civic society, and as an important formative step in building social capital. The momentum behind this adoption of participatory approaches provides the context for the thesis and the focus for this chapter. In addressing this increase in participation the chapter introduces the current empirical context before going on to explore the surrounding literature, ensuring the evaluation that follows is grounded both in theory and in practice.

The chapter is organised into six sections that are in turn divided between two themes. The first theme provides a justification for an evaluation of stakeholder participation. Section 2.1 introduces the term 'participation' and discusses the ambiguity surrounding its meaning and application. Current levels of practice and support for participatory methods are then described in the second section. Emphasis is given to the environment sector[1] as not only does this frame the thesis but it has also seen perhaps the biggest commitment to participatory methods. In the third section the chapter explores the various triggers for greater levels of participation. These are typically political initiatives that are themselves a response to a complex set of more abstract drivers born out of the challenges to 21st century governance. The fourth section discusses these various drivers and in doing so introduces those challenges participation is intended to address. The second theme provides the evaluation with a broad focus and starts by introducing a number of distinct, though often sympathetic, literatures that offer both normative and pragmatic arguments for participatory decision-making. In particular the section addresses the points raised within the political science, collaborative planning and collaborative natural resource management literatures. The final part of the chapter

[1] The environment sector is broadly defined as including all those activities, policies and stakeholders concerned with issues of environmental change, whether it is land use practices or issues of waste and emissions. Within the environment sector this thesis has a particular focus on issues of land use planning, conservation, biodiversity and coastal management.

returns to the collaborative planning literature and explores it further. This literature has seen a burgeoning critical debate in recent years that has slowed the 'communicative turn' within planning theory. The evaluation that follows this chapter seeks to make an empirical contribution to this debate and reinvigorate the academic pursuit of a democratic planning process (Healey 1992).

2.1 Justifying the need for evaluation

2.1.1 Defining participation

Although participation has quickly become established as a key term in the vocabulary of governments, NGOs, businesses and community groups it remains an "area that is fraught with definitional difficulties" (DETR 1998a:1, see also Steelman & Ascher 1997, Sewell & Phillips 1979). Indeed, despite Geraint Parry's unequivocal statement that "there is no problem as to the meaning of the word 'participation'" (Parry 1972:3), it retains significant scope for interpretation. This is perhaps in part due to Rahnema's observation that it is a word "separate from any context" and as such "ideal for manipulative purposes," (Rahnema 1992:116). Examples of the resulting ambiguity can be seen across various literatures. For instance, from the development literature Oakley suggests, "Participation defies any single attempt at definition or interpretation" (Oakley 1991:6), while Keim describes similar uncertainty within the political science field when he says "a major obstacle to any rational discussion of participation is the ambiguity the subject matter breeds" (Keim 1975:2).[2]

Despite the fact that there are difficulties in defining participation a number of suggestions have been offered over the past 35 years. The Skeffington Report, 'People and Planning', provides an early example that establishes participation as a process of allowing the public to contribute towards policy development.

> "We understand participation to be the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals" (Skeffington Report 1969:5)

[2] The variation in actions captured by the term participation is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 where a typology of participation is developed.

This 'act of sharing' covers such a range of actions, from voting systems to direct and influential dialogue, that the definition has only limited value as a tool for analysis. Parry suggests that in order for some to describe an act "as a political participation there must be a direct relationship between the act and the outcome" (Parry 1972:3). However, this would appear to exclude many current participatory initiatives where lines of cause and effect remain hidden because of the influence of context and the gap between participation and decision. A more recent definition of participation is:

> *'Forums for exchange that are organised for the purpose of facilitating communication between government, citizens, stakeholders, and businesses regarding a specific decision or problem'.* (Renn *et al.* 1995: 2 (italics in original))

Importantly this definition reduces the range of participatory practices to those that allow for a two-way flow of information between participants and decision makers. In doing so, it excludes the more tokenistic measures that prevent meaningful dialogue between individuals, and captures the Stakeholder Dialogue approach that is the focus of this evaluation.

2.1.2 Current levels of participation

By placing this evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue in the context of contemporary policy development, where participation is increasingly being seen as a key component, it becomes clear what a timely learning opportunity it provides. Although reviews of different participatory methods are numerous there have been only limited attempts to describe the extent of their current application. Despite this it is quite apparent that there is growing use of participatory methods. For instance, in a review of the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) process, Tuxworth identified approximately 2700 participatory events (Tuxworth 2000), while an earlier report commissioned by the DETR concluded that the "most surprising" result of a survey of local authorities in England was the "take-up of innovative approaches [to participation] since 1994" (Lowndes *et al.* 1998:7). Six years on such innovation would no longer seem quite so surprising, indeed there is a growing advice network that supports and facilitates such participatory policy delivery (see for instance Audit Commission 1999, Cabinet Office 2001, DETR 1998a, Wilcox 1994 and Young 1996). This literature is backed up by an ever-increasing number of organisations, charities and consultancies that present themselves as centres

of participation expertise. These include The Environment Council, Dialogue by Design, Shared Practice, InterAct, Partnerships in Practice and the Scottish Civic Forum.

Although participatory methods have found favour across policy fields it is within the environment sector where they have perhaps become most established. It is unusual to find a non-corporate environmental decision-making process "where there has been no public consultation or other form of public involvement" (Munton 2003: 109). This is a move that is given added impetus by the recognition within the conservation movement that successful conservation is best tackled in partnership *with* people rather than in isolation from them (English Nature 1994, Goodwin 1999, Grove-White & Michaels 1993, RSPB 1995, Studd 2003). Requirements for the provision of participation opportunities are increasingly being written into environmental legislation. Examples include the Water Environment and Water Services Act which transposes the European Water Framework Directive into Scottish Law, and the European Habitats Directive (EU Directive/200/60/EC, EU Directive/92/43/EEC). The recent Planning Green Paper '*Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change*' for England and Wales and the Scottish Planning White Paper '*Your Place your Plan*' both emphasise the importance of participation in the management of urban and rural spaces[3] (DTLR 2001 and Scottish Executive 2003 respectively).

When considered collectively it appears there is ample evidence to suggest a real and sustained shift within environmental policy development towards greater participation. The following section provides a description of the current political and policy context in which participatory decision-making has developed.

2.1.3 New Labour and the political environment

The political context to the rise in participation is defined by two sympathetic themes from within the Labour Government. The first of these is described by New Labour's efforts to establish a "modernised social democracy" under the heading of the Third

[3] Despite the strong theme of a 'democratic participatory planning system' within the Green Paper there remain concerns that 'some of the specific proposals undermine the welcome overall thrust towards increasing public involvement' (Warburton 2002:82).

Way (Blair 1998:1). Although for Blair and New Labour the Third Way stands as a collective term for "a multitude of loosely defined aims" (Rose 1999: 470) it is possible to identify recurrent themes. Terms such as responsibility, community, civil society and civic activism (see Blair 1998, Giddens 1998, Driver and Martell 2000) run throughout the literature and provide an important link to the agendas of social inclusion and democratic renewal put forward by the Labour Government. Much of the language associated with the Third Way parallels that within the participation and deliberative democracy literature. For instance Blair links stakeholders, responsibility and community development in his Guardian article *Battle for Britain* (Blair 1996).

For Blair the key to this reinvention of community is to be found in the notion of a stakeholder society (Driver and Martell 2000). By identifying individuals as stakeholders Blair emphasises the importance of responsibility[4] in establishing successful communities. The pursuit of civic engagement is complemented within the Third Way literature by an appreciation of the need for greater transparency and more opportunities for local direct democracy (Giddens 1998).

The language of social inclusion and democratic renewal sits alongside the Third Way philosophy and provides the second theme that shapes the political climate in the UK. The Labour Government came to power in 1997 on the back of a strong social inclusion agenda and with a clear focus on reinvigorating local democracy (Sanderson 1999, Wilson 1999). This manifesto commitment emerged as Government policy in a series of DETR documents published in 1998. The first of these was the consultation paper, *Modernising Local Government: Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (DETR 1998b), the second was the Government's White Paper, *Modern Local Government: In touch with the people* (DETR 1998c). Both placed strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement and encouraged local authorities to engage with local communities (Lowndes *et al.* 1998). While it is true that Local Authorities have responded to the call

[4] Responsibility is one of four values identified by Tony Blair in his Fabian pamphlet *The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century* (1998). For Blair, individuals must accept that, with rights come responsibilities: as citizens, parents and members of communities. It is through this recognition of responsibilities that society can take steps to developing a shared purpose (Blair 1995). The emphasis placed on the value of responsibility marks an important distinction between Third Way literature and the normative arguments of deliberative democracy and participation.

for greater public engagement to varying degrees[5] (Lowndes *et al.* 1998), the Blair Government has established a political environment rich in the rhetoric of participation and democratic renewal. Together with the Third Way philosophy that underpins New Labour's view of governance[6] this context gives momentum and explanation for the current participatory turn in public policy development and delivery.

2.1.4 Participation and public policy

Arising from within this political environment have been a number of policy statements and initiatives that have emphasised the need for public engagement and stakeholder participation. One such example is provided by the Best Value framework. Launched by the DETR in 1997 the framework "stated that authorities will need to consult with users, local businesses and the wider community in order to achieve Best Value" (Martin 1999: 2) in the provision of local services. Further momentum is given to this participatory turn by the emphasis placed on participation in such cross-sectoral documents as the Government's strategy for sustainable development (DETR 1999) and in urban regeneration policies such as the Urban Programme and the Single Regeneration Budget, both of which require community participation and partnership (Warburton 1997).

Born out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the Local Agenda 21(LA21) process describes an international commitment to sustainable development founded on principles of place-based participatory action (Young 1995, Mason 1999, Joas 2001, Warburton 1996). LA 21 guidelines of democratic involvement, transparency and the participation of what have often been historically excluded societal groups (Joas 2001) resonates with New Labour's agenda of democratic renewal. Finding such a receptive audience has helped to ensure the widespread delivery of participatory processes under the banner of LA 21.

[5] O'Riordan highlights the financial constraints on Local Authorities and the absence of additional funding to support this "modernisation of local democracy" (O'Riordan 1999:7).
[6] Governance is defined as "the processes through which collective affairs are managed" (Healey 1997:296).

In addition to these policy instruments the Aarhus Convention requires EU member states to "guarantee opportunities for the public to have a say in environmental decision making" (Palerm 1999: 230). The UK became a signatory to the UNECE's *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters* (UNECE 1998) at the Aarhus conference on Environment for Europe in July 1998. Since then there has been a growing awareness amongst government agencies such as English Nature and The Environment Agency of the steps they will be required to take in order to comply (see for instance Petts & Leach 2000, Studd 2003). The response required will ensure public participation exercises become increasingly prevalent in the environmental decision-making context.

EU legislation is clearly a powerful driver in establishing greater levels of participation in public policy delivery. The Water Framework Directive (EU Directive 2000/60/EC) provides an example of a new suite of European Directives that emphasise sustainability, integration and subsidiarity. Article 14 of this Directive states that: "Member States shall encourage the active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of this Directive" (p16).

Evolving alongside the current participatory shift within policy development is a growing interest within environmental economics regarding the contribution which participatory and deliberative techniques can make to the valuation of public goods. Traditional reductionist methods of Cost Benefit Analysis have been subjected to a sustained critique that has highlighted the inherent weakness of a method that excludes the ethical and political considerations from processes of valuation (see for instance Jacobs 1997, Burgess *et al.* 1998, Niemeyer and Spash 2001, Funtowitz and Ravetz 1994 and Sagoff 1998). Deliberative methods that seek to engage with the plurality of potential environmental values are presented as a means of addressing this weakness and offering a means of "enhancing methods of preference elicitation" (Kenyon *et al.* 2001:557).

The introduction of methods such as Citizens' Juries to valuation exercises is a response to one of a number of challenges facing processes of governance in the UK today. Taken together, the erosion of trust, the plurality of values in modern society, the importance of place and the weaknesses of science-based policy all present a collective

and powerful call for innovative methods of decision-making. The following section explores these challenges and identifies the various arguments they present for the current participatory turn in public decision-making.

2.1.5 Reasons for participation in public policy

2.1.5.1 The tensions of 21st century democracy.

While the concept of democracy captured by the literal definition 'rule by the people' remains largely uncontested there are multiple theories of democracy that offer competing interpretations as to how this might be realized (Miller 1992, Beetham 1992, Pieterse 2001). Running through these theories is the tension "between the requirements of equality and efficiency" (Miller 1992:55). At one end of the spectrum there is the liberal view of representative democracy defined by Schumpeter as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a comparative struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1942:296). Here efficiency is prioritised at the expensive of meaningful public participation in processes of governance (Smith 1975). Deliberative democracy, defined by Cohen (1997:67) as "an association whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members", offers an alternative interpretation that emphasises the link between legitimacy and opportunities for free public deliberation.

The demands for efficiency and pragmatism presented by the complexities of industrialisation coupled with the dominance of scientific reason established representative democracy as the dominant democratic theory in western society (Pateman 1970). While this remains the case today the legitimacy of representative politics is gradually being undermined by a modern society in which reference to 'the public' is increasingly recognised as being redundant (Burgess 2000, Burgess *et al.* 1998, Healey 1997). Instead the diversity of values and interests within modern western society creates multiple, fragmented publics which challenge the authority of aggregated governance and highlight the inherent assumptions within such processes. It is neither equitable nor efficient to adopt a reductionist perspective that views society as a homogeneous entity. Voices are effectively silenced during policy design, only for

them to be raised at the time of implementation. It is this context that has provided a powerful driver for the emergence of a range of participatory techniques intended to complement existing processes.

The democratic rationale behind the increase in opportunities for participation has been reinforced by a growing democratic deficit within UK politics. Public engagement in political activity is currently very low (see Young and Rao 1997, Bulkeley and Mol 2003), especially at the local level where turnouts at elections have dropped to as little as 29% (Wilson 1999). This decline is a response to a number of factors, many of which can be traced back to a "crisis of public trust" in such historically respected institutions as science and government (Petts and Leach 2000:6).

2.1.5.2 Renewing trust

Current processes of governance are challenged to develop and deliver policy in a political climate defined by the absence of public trust (Rackham and Mitchell 2000). This environment has evolved as a result of a sustained process of 'rolling back the state' that was started by the neoliberal programme of the Conservative Government and continued under the New Labour banner of 'Modernising Government'. Over a period of twenty years a process of decentralisation has devolved responsibility for service provision away from the state to a complex institutional arrangement of independent and quasi-independent organisations (Bloomfield *et al.* 2001.) As the role of the state has shifted from that of service provider to manager (Osbourne and MacLaughlin 2002) the link between the public and those accountable for policy delivery has been eroded. In its place has emerged a relationship between customers (as opposed to citizens) and service providers (as opposed to elected representatives) that offers little of the political accountability necessary to establish trust. Instead the emphasis placed on economic efficiency and the role of the market place has introduced an audit culture based on financial accountability rather than transparency and procedural equity. The absence of such democratic scrutiny has ensured that the transfer of public service delivery to non-elected bodies is recognised as playing an important role in the decline of public trust in Government (Warner 1995). This is reinforced by a language that devalues the concept of 'common good' and an environment where the institutional stability required to deliver trust is largely absent.

The trust deficit surrounding current processes of governance is reinforced by the position of politicians in Western society. A series of what were seen by many as high-profile cases of professional misconduct during both the Conservative and Labour Governments have significantly undermined the trust placed in public representatives. This has been further eroded in the past year by the debate surrounding the war in Iraq, the fallout from the Hutton Inquiry and the limited remit of the Butler Inquiry.

However, while the Government remains committed to policies such as Foundation Hospitals that continue the transfer of responsibility from state to Public Private Partnerships, the restoration of trust continues to be seen "as fundamental.... to the Government's wider project of 'modernising' the British constitution" (Lowndes 1999:116). It is against this apparent contradiction that the Government has set out its commitment to greater participation as a means of reinvigorating democracy and establishing trust in policy design and delivery.

2.1.5.3 The challenge to science

Behind the erosion of political trust is an epistemological challenge to the authority of science and what has been an almost sacrosanct role in shaping policy development. This challenge is a response to the growing appreciation that such scientifically based policy solutions are both ineffective and inequitable (Berkhout *et al.* 2003). The cultural turn of the 1970's and 1980's identified two arguments that confront policy's obsequious relationship with science. The first of these was the recognition that science is only one discourse amongst many and the dominance of its reductionist epistemology occurs at the expense of important public values and knowledges held at the local level. Reluctance to incorporate this complex web of social norms, values and interests into policy development is identified as the root cause of policy failure (Dryzek 1990, Wagle 2000). This is especially the case where science-based policy has found itself confronted by place-based knowledge. A classic example is the breakdown of relations between Cumbrian sheep farmers and scientists following the Chernobyl disaster (see Wynne 1996). Cases such as this provide empirical momentum to the argument that only by moving away from the established expert-lay dichotomy and acknowledging the relevance of different types of knowledge will it become possible to address the

complexity of contemporary environmental problems (Eden 1996, Healey 1992, Murdoch and Clark 1996, Wynne 1996).

The second argument to challenge policy's unquestioning recourse to positivist science reveals science as "socially negotiated" (Irwin & Wynne 1996:7) and "replete with value judgements" (Petts & Leach 2000:6). These conclusions are the product of a post-positive critique of reductionist science that describes it as being "grounded in and shaped by the normative suppositions and social meanings of the world it explores" (Fischer 1993: 167). Along with the broad claim that scientists adopt positions, consciously or unconsciously, that demand further resources to fund their research, this revised understanding has led to a recognition that science "can no longer claim the status of objective truth" (Burgess 2000:276) and instead should be seen as a heavily politicised activity. Locating science within this environment introduces the need for transparency and inclusion if its role within public policy processes is to be trusted. Growing public awareness of the role played by political and economic concerns in shaping the GM and climate change debates has further undermined the independence of science and strengthened calls for greater levels of participation.

Further weight is given to the call for greater public participation in science-based policy by a sustained critique of the assumptions and ignorance captured within an "objective, quantitative risk assessment" (Owens 2000:1142, see also Wynne 1996). Such top-down directed policy seeks to apply a reductionist construction of risk to an audience that not only does not share this interpretation but also presents a considerably more developed understanding of the risk than the policy process appreciates. The need to bridge this gap in perceptions of risk has led to suggestions that there ought to be a greater role for the public in the defining and exploration of risks (Stirling 2001).

Interwoven into the democratic and epistemic rationales that see participation as a response to poor electoral turnouts, the absence of trust and multiple competing knowledges, is an essentially instrumental rationale that argues participation is a means to an end. Participation is regarded as key to the successful implementation of macro, cross-sectorial policies such as sustainable development that require public consent (Blowers 1993 cited in Owens & Cowell 2002:59), while at the same time participation

must increasingly be 'seen to be done' if policy is to be regarded as legitimate (Owens & Cowell 2002).

The increase in the use of participation is not a response to any one argument; rather it is a reaction to the fact there are multiple rationales, each offering different benefits to the policy maker. Put rather more candidly, participation is seen by some as providing an answer to everything and a benefit for everyone. A number of authors have described a dichotomy that organises the multiple potential benefits on the basis of the dominant rationale behind the use of participation. For instance Warburton (1997) describes the division as that between means and ends. Others have provided similar distinctions, such as instrumental and transformative (Nelson & Wright 1995), desirable and necessary (Goodwin 1998b) and democratic right and policy implementation (Rydin & Pennington 2000). However, although these descriptions of the twin rationalities driving participation provide a useful analytic tool, the dichotomy they present is perhaps misleading. The division is clearly not exclusive; one cannot get to policy implementation without first engaging in the process of policy development. Consequently, a statement of the intended purpose of the participatory process be it instrumental or transformative, offers only limited indication as to what the actual products will be. It is the relationship between these different rationales that plays an important role in shaping the outcome of participation.

Box 2.1 Summary Box

Despite the fact that participation remains an ambiguous term it has resonated across various sectors of public policy development and implementation, especially within the environment sector. The increasing use of participatory techniques is occurring in a political environment characterised by New Labour's philosophy of the Third Way and a commitment to democratic renewal. The explanation for this current popularity is to be found in a complex blend of interwoven rationalities that respond to issues of trust and false objectivity by identifying the contribution participation can make to the challenges facing policy development in the UK today.

2.1.6 Environmental decision-making

Although the participatory turn has proved to be a pervasive trend within public policy, it is within the environment sector and the management of public goods that it is

perhaps most established (Munton 2003). Encouraged by a history of conflict and debate during the 1970s and 1980s environmental governance sought to identify a means of decision-making that offered sustainable solutions to the complexity and uncertainty characterising the environmental problems of today. During the 1990s a powerful and collective argument for greater participation in environmental decision-making emerged from often overlapping and sympathetic literatures. The postpositive challenge to the role of reductionist science in policy making (Fischer 2000, Innes 1990, Lachapelle *et al.* 2003) suggested a holistic and participatory response that resonated with not only the emancipatory arguments of environmental democracy (see Kitchen *et al.* 2002 for a review of this literature), but also the alternative dispute resolution literature (Napier 1998) and the dialogic basis of collaborative planning (Healey 1997). While such debates served to place participatory methods firmly within the policy-making lexicon their eventual widespread adoption can be seen as a pragmatic response to the challenges of environmental decision-making.

Questions of environmental management and planning are recognised as presenting 'wicked', 'messy' and 'special' problems that are "typified by multiple and competing goals, little scientific agreement on cause-effect relationships, limited time and resources, lack of information and structural inequities in access to information and the distribution of political power"[7] (Lachapelle *et al.* 2003:474, see also Rittell and Webber 1973, Coenen *et al* 1998, McCool and Guthrie 2001, Allen & Gould 1986 and Forester 1989). Presented with this challenging decision-making context, deliberative and participatory processes have emerged as being "especially apposite" (Munton 2003:113) to the successful development and implementation of appropriate and sustainable policy. Indeed, there is a recognition that "environmental policy depends for its success on public participation" (Eden 1996:183). For instance, Lafferty and Meadowcroft (1996:261) suggest that "mechanisms to involve groups in negotiation....may be a necessary condition for seriously addressing environmental dilemmas", while Connick and Innes (2003:177) believe that "collaborative dialogue amongst stakeholders is the most productive way to address complex and controversial policy questions".

[7] Although this description may be equally true in other sectors, the public good focus of environmental debates and the potential for irreversible impacts reinforces the 'wicked' challenges of environmental decision-making.

Explanations for the enthusiastic, although often variable, application of participatory methods to the challenges of environmental governance focus on what van de Hove (2000: 461) refers to as the "social characteristics of environmental processes". She describes environmental problems as being defined by four physical characteristics: complexity, uncertainty, large scales, (both temporal and spatial), and irreversibility. It is these physical characteristics that give rise to a series of human considerations in the design of suitable environmental decision-making processes. Building on the features identified by van de Hove (2000) and Daniels & Walker (1996), Table 2.1 describes the key characteristics required by a decision-making process faced with an environmental issue. Exploring the necessary characteristics leads van de Hove (2000:464) to conclude: "it appears that participatory processes may answer the specific problem solving requirements imposed by environmental issue characteristics".

Table 2.1 Environmental decision-making

Defining features of environmental issues	Necessary features of decision-making process
Uncertainty	The successful management of uncertainty requires a flexible approach that acknowledges both its reducible and irreducible nature. The appropriate method must seek to integrate all information and embrace multifarious value judgements.
Complexity	The process must provide a space in which innovative answers can be suggested and developed free from any precluding value judgements
Conflicts of interest	The process must seek to adopt the defining features of conflict/alternative dispute resolution.
Dynamic	The process should be able to respond and adapt according to the issue it seeks to resolve.
Diffused responsibility	This requires an inclusionary principle that seeks to engage all the relevant actors in the process.
Multi-use constituencies	Requires an inclusive approach that engages with all constituents.
Irreversibility	An approach that embraces the precautionary principle and seeks to develop preventive and proactive solutions.
Transversality	The requirement is for a decision-making process that encourages the necessary co-ordination for the cross-sectoral design of policy.
Large temporal and spatial scales	The long time frames associated with environmental benefits contrast with the often-immediate environmental costs – this situation requires the active involvement of all concerned and a move away from the inherent short sightedness of traditional politics. The large spatial scales of environmental issues ignore institutional boundaries and demand an inclusionary approach that recognises the various scales at which environmental policy might impact.

Underpinning this complex set of ecological and social justifications for this concerted move towards participatory environmental governance (van de Hove 2000) is the increasingly institutionalised adoption of the sustainability agenda. Its requirement for cross-sectoral commitment, coupled with the Agenda 21 emphasis on local action places the sustainable development discourse firmly within a participatory programme (see for instance DETR 1999, Healey 1996). At a strategic level environmental sustainability demands 'joined up' governance and broad institutional ownership, a requirement that is at the heart of the recently introduced Strategic Environmental Assessment process, and one that clearly defines a role for participation. These arguments for holistic and shared decision-making are equally relevant at the local scale where the challenges of environmental management are likely to be defined more sharply (Kitchen *et al.* 2002). While participation is identified as the means of delivering sustainable development the contested nature of the terms it embraces demands a deliberative and inclusionary approach to its development. Definitions of terms such as critical, sustainable and irreplaceable must engage with the many different socially constructed values of nature if truly sustainable practice is to be delivered. By embracing the cultural values of nature along with the economic and social benefits of ecosystem services, this 'deliberately inclusionary' construction of sustainable development (Healey 1997:184) emphasises the role of participation in environmental governance.

2.2 Focusing the evaluation

2.2.1 A basis for assessment

The pragmatic appeal of participation to the challenges of environmental governance and sustainability has been supported by the emergence of an "idealised narrative" and "considerable optimism" (Conley & Moote 2003:372, Beierle & Konisky 2000:587) around collaborative decision-making processes. Terms such as collaborative natural resource management (Conley & Moote 2003), collaborative learning (Daniels & Walker 1996), coordinated resource management (Moote *et al.* 1997), collaborative strategy making, planning through debate, collaborative planning, planning through consensus building (Healey 1996, 1992, 1997, and Innes 1996), community planning

(Hibbard & Lurie 2000) and deliberative planning (Forester 1999) represent a rich body of literature from both environmental management and planning theory that emphasises the value of inclusive and communicative decision-making. The following section provides a description of this 'idealised narrative' and identifies the many benefits attributed to effective participation. Although the expected benefits of any particular participatory process will depend on its purpose and context, the evaluation must also be conscious of the generic claims associated with participation if it is to be able to identify learning beyond the individual case.

Although the practice of participation is encouraged by a broad collection of predicted benefits the various supporting literatures ensure there is no definitive list. Instead the different relevant subjects emphasise different benefits. The following is a holistic description of benefits organised around the twin rationales behind the use of participatory processes. In the language of benefits this means participation has the "potential to improve the *process* and quality of *decisions made*" (Harding 1998:111).

- **Instrumental value (see Nelson & Wright 1995)**

The instrumental or means-to-an-end purpose of participation is supported by the twin claims of greater effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making. Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the outputs match the intended targets, while efficiency is described by the balance between inputs and outputs (Warburton 1997). Addressing the effectiveness theme first, there is some consensus from within the environmental management and planning literatures that participatory decision-making will lead to better decisions (Beierle & Konisky 2001, Renn *et al.* 1993, Healey 1997, Healey 1998). Although 'better' is rarely defined as it is largely context and value dependent, the claim rests on the understanding that by "paying attention to practical consciousness and local knowledge" (Healey 1997: 266) participatory decision-making is able to deliver a more "comprehensive understanding of the problem" (Blumenthal & Jannink 2000:2).

The heightened effectiveness of participatory decision-making does not come at the expense of efficiency; rather the process removes obstacles and opposition whilst creating commitment and ownership that facilitate the delivery of products (Coenen *et al.* 1998, Holmes and Scoones 2000, Munton 2003, Blumenthal & Jannink 2000,

Sidaway 1998 and Singleton 2002, Healey 1996, Healey 1997). It is argued that an inclusionary process that is seen to listen and reflect on participants' contributions raises awareness and understanding amongst the relevant constituency, facilitating policy implementation and removing many of the costs often associated with traditional hierarchical process (e.g. public inquiries).

- **Transformative value**

This second set of benefits is derived from the process of engaging, deliberating and listening to the views of others in an attempt to reach a commonly agreed decision. Common to a number of literatures, although perhaps most prominent in discussion of deliberative democracy, is the claim that participation democratises the decision making process (Dryzek 1997, Singleton 2002). By creating a communicative space that seeks to remove the dominance of any one rationale, and engages with those who are impacted upon by the decision, deliberative and inclusionary processes provide a strong mechanism for governmental accountability and citizenship development (Sanderson 1999, Smith & Wales 2000, Verba & Nie 1972). Engaging citizens in the decision-making process strengthens the legitimacy of decisions (Beetham 1992, Dahl 1989 and Dryzek 1990) and so facilitates their implementation while also ensuring the "emergence of the individuals' (better) 'public' selves" (Singleton 2002:59).

Falling under the heading of transformative benefits, and closely aligned with the aim of democratisation, is the generation of social capital. Social capital is the structure of relations between actors and among actors that provides a resource for action (Coleman 1988). The metaphor of social capital is used to describe such social relations as trust, reciprocity, common rules, norms and sanctions, and networks of communication that together offer a community, group or institution a means for delivery and action. Importantly though, as with any capital, the scale of measurement is influential in determining the result. Social capital may be high within one group but low between that group and another. Similarly social capital can vary over time. Despite the dynamic and often transient nature of social capital, participation is frequently linked to improved relations between stakeholders, strengthened lines of communication and greater levels of social trust (Singleton 2002, Sidaway 1998, Warburton 1997).

The developmental value of participation as a tool for social capital building and citizenship creation rests on the learning component captured by the conversation basis of participation. By encouraging "open and uncoerced discussion" (Miller 1992) participants learn about the values, interests, hopes and positions of other participants, putting in place the foundations for identifying a shared goal. In addition to developing a shared goal the learning allows for appropriate implementation and more productive relationships between participants.

The egalitarian principles running throughout the participatory discourse imply an equality of benefits amongst all participants. An asymmetrical distribution of benefits is unlikely to support greater levels of trust or norms of reciprocity between those involved. To summarise, the supporting literature predicts that a participatory decision-making process can be expected to efficiently deliver a legitimate, comprehensive and accurate decision via a process that secures ownership and commitment while also developing social capital and strengthening citizenship amongst all participants. Although the emphasis on the predicted benefits varies between different literatures it is the collective strength and ubiquitous nature of this 'idealised narrative' that ensures participation is widely recognised as offering an improvement on traditional hierarchical decision-making structures.

2.2.2 A basis for explanation

The previous discussion provides the thesis with an important contextual description. By identifying the enthusiastic adoption of participation by those facing the challenges of environmental governance, and by describing the predicted benefits, the evaluation is offered both a justification and a basis for establishing effectiveness. However, in order for the evaluation to move beyond a process of assessment and become a learning exercise that allows it to offer explanations for measures of effectiveness, it must be able to draw upon a theoretical basis for participation that offers a critical tool for analysis.

As the descriptions above have shown the current interest in participation is underpinned by various different literatures. Firstly, there is the collaborative natural

resource management literature that presents participation as a pragmatic solution to the challenges of multiple resource use (Smith *et al.* 1997, Blahna and Yonts-Shepard 1989, Kapoor 2001). Although this literature is firmly established, it is characterised by a lack of any singular conceptualisation. As Smith *et al.* say (1997:139), "there has been little attention to fundamental conception. The field has lurched from one buzzword to another without sufficient reconsideration or fundamental postulates". Secondly, there is the deliberative democracy debate within the political science literature (Beetham 1992, Dahl 1989, Dryzek 1990, Verba & Nie 1972, Smith & Wales 2000). Despite being built around the significant conceptual goal of democratisation it offers little in terms of pragmatic direction that could provide a powerful analytic tool. Thirdly, the development literature offers a strong conceptual basis and the pragmatism necessary for analysis, but is rooted in a context distinct from that in which participation is practiced within the UK (Cooke & Kothari 2001). Given the influence of context in determining the effectiveness of participation the development literature is limited in the analytical power it offers this thesis. Finally, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (Acland 1995, Fisher and Ury 1981) represents a strong and recurring theme within current participatory practice, namely the inclusion of all interested parties in group decision-making processes. However, its reactive focus on conflict resolution defines a narrow purpose that excludes a great deal of current participation practice.

Having identified these various different literatures and sought to relate them to this study, it is apparent that the most appropriate debate on which to build this evaluation comes from amongst the planning literature. Within the planning literature there is an established body of work on collaborative decision-making that provides a strong theoretical framework *for* action, which in turn allows this evaluation to move beyond descriptions of effectiveness and offer explanations for results. The following discussion develops the justification for this focus on collaborative planning.

Although collaborative planning may not have the Athenian history of deliberative democracy debates it has been a persistent theme over the past four decades. As early as 1966 there were calls that "meaningful and effective planning must be based on a two-way communication flow between the public and the planning agency" (Godschalk & Mills 1966:88, cited in Margerum 2002). In more recent years "the term collaborative planning has developed...into one of the key phrases in the planning

theory vocabulary" (Harris 2002:22). This ensures the evaluation can call upon a rich body of literature that argues for greater participation in the development and delivery of public planning.

An important feature of this literature is its positioning of participatory planning theory as a theory for action, one that meets the challenge of delivering social justice and environmental sustainability in an environment defined by fragmented governance structures and competing interests (Healey 1996, 1992). This pragmatic theme runs throughout the collaborative planning literature and ensures it provides an appropriate basis from which to understand current practice. Susan Fainstein describes the communicative planning model as drawing on two philosophical approaches: "American pragmatism...and the theory of communicative rationality as worked out by Jurgen Habermas" (Fainstein 2000:453). Pragmatism rests on an empirical search for best practice as opposed to the abstract foundations provided by communicative rationality. An examples of this pragmatic emphasis is offered by Forester, whose comment that "we should search especially carefully for examples of practice that exemplify what too many others only preach" (Forester 1999:8) is representative of this empirical route of development. Forester poses the practical question "what can be done" (Forester 1999:87) to develop effective planning practice within the politically charged environment it operates in. In developing an answer he turns to Hoch's pragmatic description of the planner as a "counsellor, who fosters public deliberation about the meaning and consequences of relevant plans with those who will bear the burden and enjoy the benefits of purposeful change" (Hoch 1994:294 cited in Forester 1999: 88).

This pragmatic purpose is retained within the Habermasian planning literature. For instance, Healey offers the "outlines of appropriate practices for an inter-communicative planning" (Healey 1992:154). She proposes that planning be an interactive and interpretative process, which searches for mutual understanding through respectful discussion. In a separate article she poses a series of questions designed to address the institutional needs of collaborative strategy-making. Prescriptive questions such as: "who has a stake in the qualities of urban regions and how far are these stakeholders actively represented in current governance arrangements" (Healey 1996: 213), offer a clear description of planning practice as it is defined by communicative planning theory.

The prescriptive emphasis within communicative planning theory ensures the evaluation can offer learning beyond the individual case study. In addition, its descriptions of appropriate planning practice provide an indicative guide for case study selection that in turn allows the evaluation to justify its measures of effectiveness.

Although there is an extensive and well-developed communicative planning literature, the 'communicative turn' (Healey 1996) has stumbled in the face of a burgeoning critical debate. Referring to communicative planning, Campbell & Fainstein (2003:10) suggest that "perhaps some of its early thunder has gone; despite the best efforts of its advocates, communicative action has not gained mass appeal as a totalising new planning paradigm." This thesis offers an empirical assessment that provides the means to reinvigorate the collaborative planning programme and answer some of the questions posed by the critical literature. It is the position of the author that the collaborative planning agenda has considerable potential to deliver both just and sustainable environmental decisions while doing much to re-energise civic society. However, if this potential is to be fulfilled then participatory practice needs to be subjected to empirical scrutiny; only then will it become possible to address the critiques and refine the processes so that they deliver the predicted benefits. In the absence of evaluation the collaborative programme risks collapsing under the weight of predicted benefits and raised expectations. Evaluation and the resulting learning are necessary to renew the 'communicative turn'.

Despite the growing critique facing collaborative planning theory there is a noticeable absence of empirical, 'real world', analysis. Many of the critiques that have been developed have presented theoretical challenges to the application of participatory processes in what Fainstein (2000:452) refers to as the "context of a global capitalist economy" (see for instance Harris 2001, Fainstein 2000, Sager 2002, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998, Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002 and Yiftachel and Huxley 2000). Communicative planning's leap from its normative basis to application within its political context demands an empirical assessment of effectiveness, without which planning practice will develop on the back of a number of poorly tested assumptions.

The political support behind the current move towards greater participation in planning emphasises the need to ground practice in empirical learning. Evidence of this political commitment is to be seen in the Planning Green Paper (DTLR 2001), community planning processes and the recent consultation on Planning Policy 1 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM 2004). Healey (2003:253) recognises this need for learning when she says, "a major task for planning theory and planning education is to help prepare the experts of the future for this task" [of delivering collaborative processes]. By exploring the claims and critiques within the collaborative planning literature this evaluation can make a substantive contribution to its development and application.

2.2.3 Collaborative planning

In recent years collaborative planning theory has frequently been identified as "the new paradigm of planning" (Healey 1999:1129, see also Innes 1995, Umemoto 2001). For many it provides the much sought for "overarching theoretical understanding and prescription for planning" (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones 2002) that has been missing since the collapse of the comprehensive-rational approach. However, within this theoretical paradigm there are variations in language that have seen the 'movement' referred to as 'planning through debate' (Healey 1992), 'communicative planning' (Healey 1993, Innes 1995), 'collaborative planning' (Healey 1997), 'argumentative planning' (Fisher & Forester 1993), 'deliberative planning' (Forester 1999) and 'planning through consensus building' (Innes 1996). Such variation is partly a result of the relative youth of the planning theory as well as being a consequence of the varying emphasis placed on a number of different if sympathetic literatures. Under the banner of 'participation in planning', authors have drawn on notions of communicative rationality, neo-pragmatics, deliberative democracy, consensus building and ideas of 'new institutionalism' (see Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones 2002 and Innes 1996). While the competing interpretations and different intellectual roots ensure that the 'communicative turn' in planning presents a theory for *both* analysis and prescription, it retains a common goal of "making sense together whilst living differently" through the transformative potential of conversation (Forester 1989:118, and Healey 1997).

Collaborative planning is presented as an alternative to "the strait-jacket of narrow instrumental rationality" that helps to "realises the democratic potential of planning". (Healey 2003: 237 and Healey 1992:143 respectively). In the complex and interwoven cultural heterogeneity of the UK today, automatic recourse to scientific rationalism fails to provide either a democratic or a sustainable planning process. Collaborative planning's foundations in an alternative, communicative conception of rationality describe a planning practice which engages with multiple knowledges in a discursive process that emphasises transformation through learning. Such processes of communicative action seek to establish an uncoerced and undistorted shared decision based on inter-subjective communication (Healey 1992, Dryzek 1990).

The concept of communicative rationality (Habermas 1984) presents a challenge to the dominant and exclusive reasoning of instrumental rationality in western democracy. It defines a course of action based on the discursive validation of all knowledge claims, a process that places the scientific alongside the anecdotal. This egalitarian project confronts the established bias within instrumental rationality and seeks to engage the diversity of knowledge, cultural traditions and systems of morality in an attempt to identify a shared reason for action. Practical knowledge is no longer relegated in the face of formalised scientific 'facts', cultural diversity is recognised and socially constructed values are acknowledged in a process of "conversation between equals" (Healey 1997:266). Conversation is seen as an active process of consensus building in which the 'best argument' emerges through public dialogue (Elster 1997, Smith and Wales 2000). The transformative power of collaborative dialogue to deliver a shared decision, supported by new levels of trust and understanding (Healey 1997), is determined by issues of access, language and equality amongst participants' competencies. Each of these issues challenges the aim of collaborative planning and led Forester to describe such processes as "precarious and vulnerable achievements" (Forester 1999:7).

Conscious of the distorting influence market forces and institutional structures can have on dialogue, communicative rationality depends on a constant critical assessment of participatory practices if it is to meet its goal of uncoerced consensus (Healey 1997). This need for critical scrutiny is supported by Habermas' communicative ethics that challenge dialogical practices to meet standards of comprehensibility, integrity,

legitimacy and truth (Habermas 1984). These principles are to be found underpinning the Habermasian notion of the 'ideal speech situation', an open and transparent forum that supports dialogue between "people who are in every respect equal in power and understanding" (Healey 1997:266). Although the 'ideal speech situation' is widely recognised as being a "utopia which cannot be achieved in reality" (Hillier 1995:124, see also Hague 1984, Healey 1997, Forester 1985), it is seen as offering a heuristic device with which to scrutinise participatory processes[8] (see for instance the evaluation work of Renn *et al.* 1995). Guided by these criteria of communicative discourse, collaborative planning strives to establish a dialogue between diverse stakeholders that delivers a shared agreement that is recognised as valid by all.

Although there is a level of theoretical diversity within collaborative planning, Habermas's theory of communicative action provides a common theoretical basis. Building on this shared philosophy collaborative planning can be seen to take a number of different forms, for instance Innes describes consensus building as aiming "to resemble the theorist account of communicative rationality" (Innes 1996:461) while for others collaborative planning might take the form of brainstorming, visioning or focus group activities. However, within this variation it is possible to identify recurring features of practice, in particular the concept of stakeholders and an emphasis on place-based planning. These concepts are closely tied to one another. Healey's description of stakeholding as a central component in the development of collaborative planning (Healey 1997, Harris 2002) can be understood as a response to the "reassertion of place focused concerns in public policy" (Healey 1998:3).

Collaborative planning represents a repositioning of planning theory as a tool for place *focused* decision-making. This requires a planning practice that breaks out of "a sectoralised and centralised approach" (Healey 1998:3) and encourages the engagement of the full breadth of place-based interests. Adopting this position ensures collaborative planning must engage with an inclusive notion of stakeholders. This is reflected in the definition of stakeholders as a term referring to all those with a 'stake' in a place (Healey 1997). The term replaces traditional selection criteria that would exclude the diversity of values, knowledges and interests collaborative planning seeks to engage

[8] Note that the focus is on the process of deliberation and not on the outputs.

with. By doing so the only certainty can be that collaborative planning theory is challenged to suggest a process which will deliver an appropriate strategy or plan from amongst this complex blend of values and expectations.

In attempting to meet this challenge, while ensuring planning embraces ideas of social justice and sustainability, Healey (1992, 1997) sets out the main components of a planning approach grounded in the ideas of communicative action. The emphasis throughout these propositions is that a 'process' route to planning that avoids *a priori* assumptions of good/bad and right/wrong, provides the key to removing the imposition of one group's reasoning over another and instead identifies a commonly shared decision (Healey 1992). The following points outlining the 'process' route have come to be regarded as "fundamental principles within communicative planning theory" (Harris 2001:52, see also Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998).

- Planning should be an interactive and interpretative process. It must seek to engage with multiple discourses or 'lifeworlds' rather than centring on formal techniques of analysis.
- This interaction between different communities and covering different discourses requires respectful communication. Healey describes this as "recognising, valuing, listening and searching for translative possibilities" (Healey 1992:154).
- In order to establish a sympathetic environment for this dialogic process, planning needs to be inventive in its design of communicative arenas.
- Within this space stakeholders should not dismiss any contribution until it has been explored. Rather they should seek to understand the relevance and value as the speaker sees it.
- In order to ensure this process of acknowledgment is protected, the process must support a reflexive and critical capacity that prevents the domination of any given discourse at the expense of others.
- Drawing on ideas within the literatures on principled negotiation and consensus building this inter-discursive process engineers the transformation of individual fixed preferences. The public articulation of arguments, within an environment defined by a common goal of mutual learning, ensures the process identifies a shared decision. Innes (1996:465) offers an empirical example of this

transformation in her review of collaborative planning processes from California; she suggests that "in all cases, many stakeholders came to explicitly regard their purpose in participating as at least in part a collective one". In this way the decisions from a collaborative planning process come to approximate the public interest.

- In addition to facilitating the transformation from individual to public interest the process has the potential to change established power relations and material conditions. Through maintaining such reflexive and critical elements as openness and transparency, the process increases understanding, highlights "oppressions and dominatory forces" (Healey 1992:155) and builds new relations between stakeholders.
- Such collaborative processes are focused on "arenas of struggle" (Healey 1993:84 in Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1999), where public decisions are contested and evaluated. In this environment collaborative planning offers a process that will mediate such debates through a process of respectful listening and learning.

Although the above propositions are often acknowledged as describing the central tenets of collaborative planning as it is developed from communicative action, there remains considerable variation in the evolution of such planning processes. One explanation for this variation is offered by Friedmann & Lehrer (1998:80 in Harris 2002:33) who describe "communicative action as being an immensely difficult concept", a situation not helped by the fact that Habermas's Theory of Communicative action is regarded by some as being "massive and complex" (White 1988:1). In addition to ensuring variation in practice this scope for interpretation challenges the evaluation of participatory planning practices. If there is only limited consensus as to what a 'true' collaborative process entails, then any failings of that process to deliver the claimed benefits of transformation and shared agreement are easily dismissed. For example; in her review of collaborative planning processes Innes (1996:471) explains the comment from one key player "that he had been duped into a position harmful to his group's interests" by saying that "the principles of communicative rationality had not been followed". By this she meant that the process had not employed a neutral facilitator, had not been supplied with sufficient technical information and had been a relatively

short process of under a year. None of these are immediately recognisable from the above list as central tenets of communicative action.

2.2.4 Critiquing collaborative decision-making

Collaborative planning and its basis in communicative action clearly provide the following evaluation with valuable terms of reference. However, it is the emergence of a critique challenging the applicability of collaborative planning that ensures the evaluation is situated in a rich academic context. Firstly, the questions posed by this burgeoning critical literature ensure the evaluation is offered a holistic basis from which to develop its analysis. This context allows the evaluation to develop a balanced and credible appraisal that is able to pose challenging questions of the results. Secondly, this evaluation presents a valuable opportunity to make an empirical contribution to the debate surrounding the use of participatory techniques in issues of environmental decision-making. In doing so it has the potential to begin the process of refining collaborative practice and aid the identification of best practice.

Critiques of collaborative decision-making are by no means confined to the planning literature. For instance, a review by Pelletier *et al.* (1999:103) challenges the claims of deliberative democracy and suggests that "local deliberative processes may produce outcomes that are neither fair nor efficient and reflect the values of certain stakeholders more than others". Similar conclusions are to be found within the development literature. In an edited text entitled '*Participation: The New Tyranny?*' Cooke & Kothari (2001:13) present a number of empirical development studies that lead them to identify a series of "fundamental problems with participatory approaches". These are summarised as:

> "the naivety of assumptions about the authenticity motivations and behaviour in participatory processes; how the language of empowerment masks a real concern for managerialist effectiveness; the quasi-religious associations of participatory rhetoric and practice; and how an emphasis on the micro-level of intervention can obscure, and indeed sustain, broader macro-level inequalities and injustice (Cooke & Kothari 2001:14).

Other authors have drawn on public choice theory (see Olsen 1965) to identify participation as posing a collective action problem (see Rydin & Pennington 2000,

Pennington & Rydin 2000). It is argued that the focus of environmental management effectively removes the incentive to participate due to the non-excludable and indivisible nature of public goods. The absence of significant individual incentives to participate leaves the process open to special interest capture, a risk that is compounded by the resource demands of collaborative planning that prevent many minority interests groups from engaging to the same extent as more established stakeholder groups.

Within the environmental management literature there are concerns that the delivery of a national conservation agenda through local participatory processes establishes "systematic discrepancies" amongst the expectations of the stakeholders involved (Goodwin 1998a:481). The result may be a "fragmentation of conservation ideas" (Goodwin 1999:383) or alternatively, where national imperatives are imposed, the perception of participation as process of recruiting 'hired hands' rather than listening to 'local voices' (Goodwin 1998a). Goodin (1992:168) neatly spells out the discrepancies between the procedural focus of participatory decision-making and the requirement conservation makes for action and change: "to advocate democracy is to advocate procedure, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate outcomes."

2.2.4.1 Debate within the planning literature

While there is clearly breadth to the emerging critique that mirrors the broad acceptance of participatory processes, the greatest depth is to be found within the planning literature. Here a multifaceted critique has developed, combining both theoretical and practical questions of the 'communicative turn'. The following discussion is intended to provide an introduction to the themes raised within this debate and in doing so provide the evaluation with a critical point of reference that can be explored further if the results require it. Despite Harris's (2002:29) observation that "critics have not always been clear on whether criticisms are being levelled at communicative planning theory or collaborative planning as a form of practice", it is possible to detect a distinction, albeit a sometimes conflated one, between the two arguments.

- **Weakness in practice**

A strong theme running throughout the critical literature reflects on the failure of collaborative planning to sufficiently address issues of context (Healey 2003a, Harris

2001, Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998, Hibbard & Lurie 2000, Yiftachel & Huxley 2000, Tewdwr-Jones & Thomas 1998, Umemoto 2001). By shifting the focus from the substantive to the process "the context in which planners work and the outcome of planning fade from view" (Fainstein 2000:455). The challenge that collaborative planning neglects the wealth of distorting influences captured within any given context does much to undermine its bold predictions of shifts in power bases (Healey 1997) and unanimity in decisions. In a study of collaborative planning by the Brecon Beacons National Park planning authority Tewdwr-Jones & Thomas (1998) conclude that although the innovative process established closer working relations among stakeholders, the policy and legal context prevented community initiatives being translated into substantive outputs, meaning the end result was one of public frustration rather than ownership. Another study by Hibbard and Lurie (2000) describes established levels of social capital as an essential feature of context if collaborative planning is to be successful. This poses a problem for a great many participatory exercises which are implemented specifically *because* of a breakdown in effective communication and a lack of sufficient trust. In addition to these two contextual requirements there is growing appreciation of the challenges posed by the cultural heterogeneity of modern western societies. Umemoto (2001:17) describes the challenge this diversity presents to those participatory processes required to facilitate communication across multiple "culture-based epistemologies". Problems are presented by the demands of cultural translation, the complex historical and cultural backgrounds that define the various interpretative windows and the multiple meanings of language. Together they ensure that any communicative act lacks the necessary equality of comprehensibility amongst participants.

The goal of undistorted communication is further damaged by the absence of any mechanism to prevent the fact that "individuals can deliberately obfuscate the facts and judgements to their own benefit" (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998:1981). To assume that all participants might come together with a common purpose of making sense together pays little regard to the power of the individual and the multiple motivations that might bring a stakeholder to a process. Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger (1998) argue that hidden within communicative action are three other social concepts of action that do much to dilute any claims of integrity, legitimacy or truth in dialogue. Teleological action would see a participant employing strategies to bring about his or

her intended ends. Alternatively, or perhaps simultaneously, stakeholders may form pacts with like-minded participants in order to assert their viewpoints; this is known as normatively regulated action. Lastly, a participant can choose to present themselves in a particular way. This may be to gain sympathy or acceptance amongst other stakeholders or alternatively in order to withhold information and present a false impression. Dramaturgical action such as this ensures the communicative act is potentially ridden with strategic behaviour and political posturing.

Perhaps the biggest practical challenge to the communicative planning program is that of retaining the democratic and open foundations on which the process is built, while at the same time developing a suitable planning strategy (Healey 1997, Sager 2002). Behind this challenge lie issues of representation, inclusion and deliberation (see Munton 2003, O'Neil 2001) that amplify the difficulties of moving from open dialogue to widely accepted and implementable decisions. The danger is that the need to produce an appropriate statutory and political decision ensures that any consensus is achieved through a subtle process of coercion rather than organic development. This need to conform is a potentially damaging constraint as it has the potential to frustrate and ignore the expectations of many stakeholders. Underpinning the potential contradiction between open dialogue and statutory imperative is the weakness of communicative rationality in the face of established power. As Flyvbjerg explains, modernity, to which communicative rationality remains true, "relies on rationality as the means of making democracy work". However, "rationality is such a weak form of power that [participatory] democracy built on rationality will be weak too" (Flyvbjerg 2003:325). The suggestion that communicative rationality comes a poor second to those established power bases outside of the participatory arena emphasises the need to ensure there is real commitment from all established decision-making bodies to the principles of participation and that any process is firmly embedded within existing decision-making structures. Flyvbjerg's statement that "power has a rationality that rationality does not know" (Flyvbjerg 1998: 225) highlights the assumptions and naivety within collaborative planning regarding the power of the communicative act and its effectiveness as a mechanism for democratic change.

- **Circular theory**

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the assessment of practice and measures of effectiveness, the theoretical challenge to collaborative planning remains an important consideration. Of particular interest is the normative contradiction running throughout the communicative act. In contrast to the transparent and inclusive process that seeks to engage with all values and understandings, the communicative process is built on the "assumption of a single rationality to which all subscribe" (Munton 2003:121). This hypothesis is undermined by the lack of any common motivation, except perhaps external threat, that brings stakeholders together and the pervasive influence of instrumental concerns that participants bring to the process. Proponents of collaborative planning theory would respond that the open and deliberative nature of the process would allow this defining set of values to be challenged. But, as Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger (1998:1978) ask, "how can you challenge a set of values within a system that has been created by those values without destroying the system or process itself?

2.2.5 Summary

This chapter has provided the thesis with both a justification and an explanatory basis for the evaluation of stakeholder participation. The following chapters build on this and focus the evaluation on a particular participatory process known as Stakeholder Dialogue. While not being linked to any single literature Stakeholder Dialogue adopts the key principles introduced in this chapter as a means for shaping a transformative process that delivers comprehensive and supported environmental decisions. This process is explored and defined in detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Participation, Stakeholder Dialogue and The Environment Council

Introduction

This chapter has the principal aim of establishing an understanding and definition of Stakeholder Dialogue. Two approaches to these goals are offered. The first situates Stakeholder Dialogue within a framework of participation. The second presents an overview of the development of Stakeholder Dialogue and draws on a range of material offered by The Environment Council. By developing this twin approach this chapter ensures the evaluation addresses the twin challenges of assessment and learning. Any measure of the effectiveness must be developed in response to the purpose, principles and practise of Stakeholder Dialogue; equally, if the evaluation is to contribute to a wider discussion regarding participatory processes, it must allow Stakeholder Dialogue to be placed alongside these alternative processes.

3.1 The dimensions of participation

A rapid rise in the use of participatory methods has meant the field of practice has become increasingly diverse and poorly defined. In response to this variety and replication there have been numerous attempts to establish typologies or taxonomies of participation (e.g. Arnstein 1969, Barnes 1999, Chilvers *et al.* 2003, Jackson 2001, Marsh *et al.* 2001, Rosener 1978, and Rowe *et al.* 2001). In reviewing the literature it is possible to identify three contrasting, albeit not exclusive, reasons for the various typologies that currently exist. Firstly, Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation was offered as means to "encourage a more enlightened dialogue.....over citizen participation" (Arnstein 1969:216). A second reason is closely tied to the increasing level of statutory requirement for public participation and, as a result, has been concerned with ensuring greater 'fitness for purpose' (see for instance Petts & Leach 2000 and Clark *et al.* 2001). Lastly, an increasing recognition of the importance of evaluation has led to the development of classifications of participation. Rowe *et al.*

(2001) offer a succinct explanation for the use of such classifications: "if one were to assume that the dimensions [of similarity and difference between different mechanisms] reflect the essential differences between the mechanisms, then one could attribute any differences in their relative *effectiveness* to the specific dimensions on which they differ" (Rowe *et al.* 2001:9 original emphasis). Such classifications are also of value to a non-comparative study as they offer an evaluation a means of both establishing the goals of the particular process and providing possible explanations for the results of an assessment.

The aim of the following discussion is to define the various dimensions that describe the differences between participatory practices. This list draws on the analysis offered by Barnes (1999).

3.1.1 The participants

There is considerable variation across participatory processes with regard to the composition of participants. At one extreme, the process may be made up of 5000 members of the public, as with the UK's People Panel (Petts & Leach 2000). At another level, a process may be made up of 10-20 individuals upon whom a decision directly impacts, as can be the case with Stakeholder Dialogue. Any attempt at organising this range of participants needs to reflect the great variety of "epistemic claims" made by participants (Chilvers *et al.* 2003). These claims can be organised into three categories of knowledge as follows. Firstly, specialist knowledge refers to expertise in a scientific, technical or socio-economic area. Secondly, procedural refers to an understanding of how institutions work and an appreciation of 'the rules of the game'. Finally, local or lay knowledge captures the experiential or common-sense understandings gained from living and working within a particular locality or situation (Chilvers *et al.* 2003, see also Barnes 1999).

Cutting across this typology of knowledge it is possible to identify an important distinction between participants, described by Barnes (1999) as that between citizens and consumers or alternatively as publics and stakeholders. When these two levels of organisation, knowledge and public/stakeholders, are considered together it becomes

possible to identify three types of participant: professional stakeholders, local stakeholders and the public (Clark *et al.* 2001). The distinctions made by Clark *et al.* (2001) provide an indication of the great variety of interests, values, knoweldges and needs encompassed by the term stakeholder.

- Professional stakeholders are paid staff whose participation is representing a public or private sector organisation, charity, or academia. They typically contribute a specialist (expert) knowledge to the participatory process and may often work at a regional or national strategic level, meaning they can have limited appreciation or experience of the local context a participatory process may occur in.
- Local stakeholders consist of non-paid representatives from groups, clubs, associations which typically operate at a well defined local level. Coastal examples might include a representative of the local yacht club or a member of local conservation group. They may offer specialist knowledge, however, it is more likely that they will bring a rich understanding of the local context developed through the experience of participating within their collective interest group.
- The wider public is considerably larger than either of the previous two groups and, for the purpose of a classification of participants, is made up of representatives of 'no-one other than themselves'. In most cases, this group can contain large numbers of 'uninformed' individuals who may well become interested if they are 'informed' at some later stage. It is the potential of this shifting understanding and awareness that can provide challenges to the legitimacy and credibility of certain participatory processes.

3.1.2 The purpose

As with the make-up of participants, the purpose of the participatory process varies both within and between methods of participation. Purpose is a statement of intended products and is therefore dependent on the extent to which the process is regarded as a 'means to and end, or an end in itself'[9]. Petts & Leach (2000) identify three primary purposes that emphasise the predicted value of the process:

- legitimation of decision-making;

[9] For a full development of the influence of the 'means to and end or an end in itself' balance in determining the purpose of the participatory process, refer to Chapter 2

- enhancement of democracy; and
- enlargement of citizenship.

However, while it is clear that these normative purposes underpin many of the current arguments for greater participatory decision-making, it is also true that the majority of participatory processes must address significant instrumental purposes. A process has to conclude *with* decisions if it is to ensure the legitimation of decision-making. The emphasis placed on these contrasting purposes is influential in defining the nature of the participatory process that results.

3.1.3 Degree of power sharing

This is perhaps the principal dimension along which participatory processes are seen to vary. Sherry Arnstein developed the first typology of participation based on the extent to which citizen's power determined the end product (Arnstein 1969). Arnstein's ladder has been repeated and developed over recent years. From the development literature, Oakley (1991) describes three levels of participation reflecting the level of power and control devolved to participants. These are:

- **Participation as contribution**. This level describes a low level of delegation. Participants are provided with the opportunity to contribute resources and opinions, which may consist of local experiential knowledge or an appreciation of local networks of communication and organisation.
- **Participation as organisation**. At this level, participation is a formative process through which new informal groupings and/or more formal organisations may be developed. This participatory, organic development demands some degree of delegation of power and control.
- **Participation as empowerment**. Participation is regarded as 'a means in itself'. It is a process of delegation whereby power and control change hands from the established decision-makers to the relevant constituents.

The sliding scale of delegation can be seen to be at the heart of the variation in participatory methods of decision-making. However, the extent to which any such delegation is real, or revealed to all participants, creates an additional scale on the power dimension, one of appreciation or acknowledgement. Barnes (1999:64) hints at this

when she describes the scale as "the degree of power sharing *implied* through opening up opportunities for public participation" (emphasis added). Within a participatory process, different participants experience varying levels of devolution of power depending on their reasons for participating and the purpose of the process. This uneven shifting of power creates an influential dynamic within a participatory process and is one reason why locating a particular method on a typology of participation is dependent on the position from which it is viewed.

3.1.4 Communication

In response to the deliberative element to participation, Arnstein's ladder has often been reframed in terms of communication or flow of information (IEAM 2000, Petts & Leach 2000, Rowntree 1992 and Wilcox 1994). Rowntree (1992) defines three broad levels of participation in terms of the direction of communication; each shift in the direction of information represents a change in the degree of power-sharing. One-way communication is simply concerned with providing the means for the provision of information from one set of participants to another. There is no opportunity for participants to respond, question or engage in any meaningful dialogue. Partial communication allows participants to comment on the original message or information from the traditional power holders. Finally, full communication establishes the means for open dialogue between all participants.

In order to match Arnstein's ladder, additional categories are required to describe a more substantial shift in power towards the majority of participants. Petts & Leach (2000) describe a four-tier level of participation based on the flow of information that recognises the potential of participation to go beyond power-sharing. The first three levels are equivalent to the three defined above. The fourth describes a greater level of participant control and contribution in which participants are influential in decision-making and implementation. The four levels are:

- education and information provision;
- information feedback;
- involvement and consultation; and
- extended involvement.

In their *Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government* (DETR 1998a) the DETR provide a similar three-tier organisation of participation. In this case, the level of communication is tied to its influence on the decision-making process. For instance 'listening and learning' describes a process of gathering information and opinions on a decision to be made.

In practice the distinctions between the various levels of communication can become blurred. Levels of communication or opportunities for change in the direction of information flow will vary throughout the process, ensuring that participants can regard the process quite differently, depending on their reasons for involvement and the stage at which they participate.

3.1.5 Scale

Barnes (1999:64) identifies "the scope of participation and the level at which change may be achieved" as an influential dimension along which one can locate the range of participatory processes currently on offer. She offers five different scales of impact on which a particular process might be seen to act. These are:

- on individual decision-making;
- at group, community or neighbourhood level;
- at the level of social, health or environmental programmes;
- in relation to a particular organisation;
- at the level of policy making (Barnes 1999).

In addition to this there is a second interpretation regarding scale that provides an alternative dimension on which participatory processes can be seen to vary. This refers to the geographical scale at which the process operates (Chilvers *et al.* 2003). Certain participatory processes engage with participants on a national scale, e.g. Deliberative Polls or Consensus Conferences (IPPR 2001), while others operate at a local level, for instance, Planning for Real (NEF 1998). However, while the participation may occur at one level, the scale of impact may well be at another. This is increasingly the case as national policy-making acknowledges the influence of the local in ensuring successful implementation and addresses this through the provision of local participatory processes

(see for instance the discussion of LEAPS by Downs (1997), also the Habitats Directive, and the Water Framework Directive). A dimension of scale can therefore offer quite contrasting arrangements of participatory processes depending on whether the dimension refers to scale of participation or scale of change. Within a participatory process there may be considerable variation in how participants view the scale of the process, in particular when a process run at a local scale includes representatives of national organisations, such as government agencies.

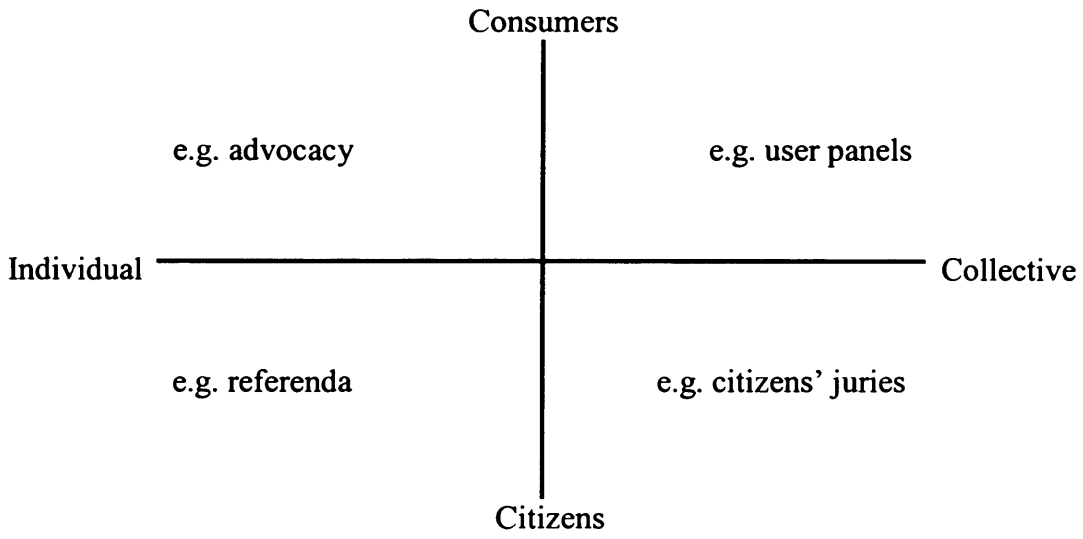
3.2 The value of a typology of participation

Despite attempts to establish an accepted typology of participation the challenge of defining a particular participatory process remains. Rowe *et al.* (2001:8) highlighted this when they identified participatory processes that had "either been misnamed or have been inappropriately considered as identical to other mechanisms with considerably different characteristics". In order to address this they developed another 'taxonomy of mechanisms' (Marsh *et al.* 2001). This draws on some of the scales of variation described above while including new dimensions of variation that relate to the practice of the participatory method. For instance, it considers the duration of the process, the opportunity for deliberation and the requirement it places on resources.

While the taxonomy suggested by Marsh *et al.* (2001) does offer additional dimensions on which a participatory process can be located there remain inherent problems in defining such practices. In part this is due to the scope for interpretation of the various terms used in their description. The possibility for such variation is then amplified by the common goal of inclusion with its immediate multiplication of understandings and interpretations. Although many of the scales referred to by Rowe *et al.* (2001) do not represent continuous sets of data neither do they define discrete sets of data. Instead, the dimensions highlight the considerable variation across participatory processes and the scope for change between the various polar positions. When taken together these factors set out the challenge of establishing non-negotiable and recognisable definitions for participatory processes.

Despite these challenges, a typology of participation is a useful tool for locating a particular participatory practice among the range of alternatives and in doing so identifying its key dimensions. Barnes (1999:62) describes a framework as a means of "distinguishing the nature and purpose of different models of participation" and as tool a for ensuring an evaluation can "answer questions about how successful different methods of enabling citizen participation might be". The framework developed by Barnes (1999) (see Figure 3.1 below) recognises the interrelated nature of the various dimensions or scales and offers a two-dimensional model on which to locate a particular process. In the following section I draw on the various dimensions of participation described above and on the two-dimensional framework suggested by Barnes (1999), in order to describe a more developed typology that allows the thesis to accurately locate Stakeholder Dialogue among the principal dimensions of participation.

Fig 3.1 An example of how a two dimensional framework can be used to distinguish different types of participatory processes. (from Barnes 1999:64)

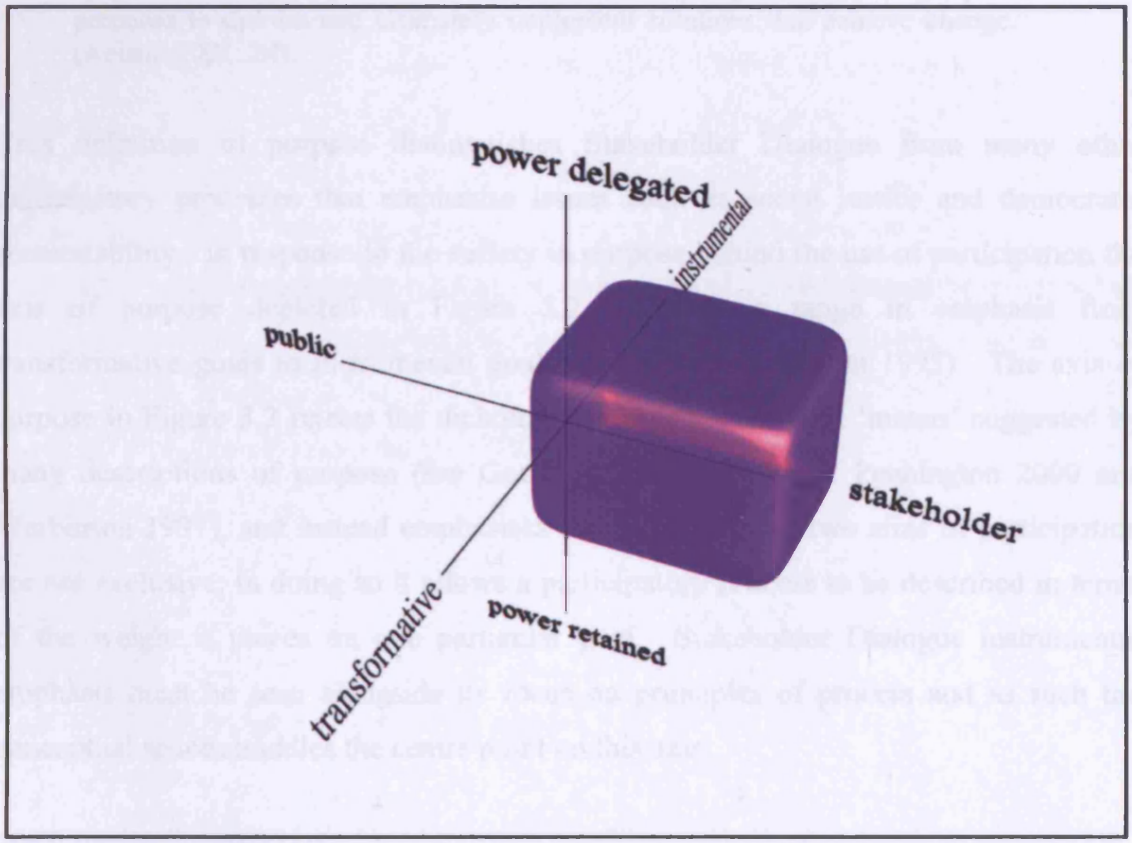


3.3 Locating Stakeholder Dialogue on the axes of participation

In early discussions with facilitators at The Environment Council, Stakeholder Dialogue was referred to as a 'philosophy', 'an approach' and 'a way of thinking'. This ensures any definition of Stakeholder Dialogue is dependent to a significant degree on

individual understandings. The extent to which this scope for interpretation is operationalised can be seen in the distribution of Stakeholder Dialogue cases along various axes of participation. The framework provided by Figure 3.2 offers both a means of capturing this variation in interpretation as well as an initial step towards establishing a definition. The three dimensions used to define and locate Stakeholder Dialogue within participatory decision-making are developed below. The three axes were chosen because they describe features of Stakeholder Dialogue that remain constant across the variation in practice. The area described by the following diagram is the conceptual space of Stakeholder Dialogue suggested by its principles and supporting literature.

Fig 3.2 The conceptual participatory space of Stakeholder Dialogue



I. Participants. This axis represents the possible variation in the organisation of participants. However, in doing so it rejects the notion of fixed definitions of participants suggested by most 'ladder' typologies and instead acknowledges the dynamic nature of a participant's role within participatory decision-making. The axis in Figure 3.2 allows the classification to be represented on a more continuous scale that reflects the often-blurred boundaries between categories of participants. Although there

is variation between examples of Stakeholder Dialogue its goal of comprehensive stakeholder inclusion remains a constant feature. As a result the conceptual space it occupies on this axes falls exclusively within the stakeholder region.

II. Purpose. "The purpose of [Stakeholder] Dialogue is to enable discussion that leads to change" (Acland 2001:24). In developing this purpose Acland establishes that the process of Stakeholder Dialogue is concerned specifically with ensuring sustainable change. Although there may be considerable variation in the level of change resulting from Stakeholder Dialogue the emphasis remains on achieving instrumental goals.

> "It may be a meeting to inform rather than make decisions. Fine. But I advise sponsors and stakeholders not to enter a dialogue process unless they are prepared to discuss and ultimately implement solutions that achieve change." (Acland 2001: 24).

This definition of purpose distinguishes Stakeholder Dialogue from many other participatory processes that emphasise issues such as social justice and democratic accountability. In response to the variety in purpose behind the use of participation the axis of purpose depicted in Figure 3.2 describes a range in emphasis from transformative goals to instrumental goals (see Nelson & Wright 1995). The axis of purpose in Figure 3.2 rejects the dichotomy between 'ends' and 'means' suggested by many descriptions of purpose (see Goodwin 1998a, Rydin & Pennington 2000 and Warburton 1997), and instead emphasises the fact that these two aims of participation are not exclusive; in doing so it allows a participatory process to be described in terms of the weight it places on one particular goal. Stakeholder Dialogue instrumental emphasis must be seen alongside its focus on principles of process and as such the conceptual space straddles the centre point on this axis.

III. Power. The third dimension presents an interpretation of Arnstein's ladder of participant control. Rather than starting from Arnstein's base line of manipulation, this axis describes the variation in participant power between the polar positions of education (information provision) and citizen control. There are two key variables that determine the extent to which a participant might be seen to have control or power over the end product of a participatory process. The first is the process itself, in particular the timing and the degree to which the process offers a fair and transparent means for

participant engagement. In order to offer participants a significant opportunity to decide the products, the process must start before traditional decision-making bodies take any significant and conclusive decisions. The opportunity offered by the timing of the process must then be backed up by the design and implementation of the process itself. The second of these two variables refers to the context in which the decision-making takes place and, in particular, the extent to which the product is 'bounded' by any statutory 'envelope'. This is significant in that a participatory bounded process will offer only an incomplete shift in control from established decision-makers to participants.

As with the previous two dimensions, any attempt to categorise the variation in participatory processes presents a misrepresentation of the near-continuous nature of any power dimension, the dynamic nature of participation and the complex plurality of interpretations that can exist within a single process. Stakeholder Dialogue is located along this scale of power in accordance with to two claims made by The Environment Council. The first is that 'a genuine Stakeholder Dialogue is both self-determining in terms of participants setting the agenda, deciding who participates, what facts are required, the work programme and outputs and also it is self-regulating in terms of setting terms of reference and agreeing how participants will conduct themselves" (S. Robinson pers. com. March 2001[11]). The second claim describes how in a Stakeholder Dialogue process "people work *together* to create mutually beneficial solutions to their problems" (TEC undated:1 emphasis added). Figure 3.2 provides a realistic description of the conceptual space Stakeholder Dialogue occupies on this scale.

3.4 The Environment Council

3.4.1 A historical review of The Environment Council

A history of The Environment Council offers an important insight into the origins and development of Stakeholder Dialogue. In presenting this short historical overview it becomes clear that The Environment Council developed Stakeholder Dialogue as a

[11] This information was gathered from an early interview with the Chief Executive of The Environment Council. This meeting was one of a number held with staff at The Environment Council in an attempt to identify common features of Stakeholder Dialogue.

'sustainability tool' in response to the growing awareness of the ties between business and the environment that rose to the fore in the environmental debates of the late 1980s and 1990s.

The Environment Council acquired its name in 1986; previously, it had been known as the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo). CoEnCo had existed since 1969 and had operated as an environmental umbrella group. The appointment of Steve Robinson as Chief Executive in 1986 marked a change in focus within the organisation. The name CoEnCo was dropped and replaced with The Environment Council. The main work programmes to continue post-1986 were based on its Business and Environment Program and Information Program. The Business and Environment Program developed a worldwide network of environmental managers, the aim being to "help managers introduce sound environmental policies and practice" into their corporate affairs (Baines 1995:16). The Information Program acted as a general contact point for a wide range of environmental inquires, both from with the environmental campaign movement and from the wider public.

During the early 1990s The Environment Council went on to develop three more principal areas of focus. These were: the Sustainable Business Forum, Conservers at Work and Environmental Resolve. Conservers at Work was launched in 1994 to "empower employees to do their part for the environment, helping them to conserve energy and resources at work" (Environment Council News, May 1994:1). The Sustainable Business Forum was established in February 1995. The Forum comprised a group of "responsible companies seeking to define and promote business practice that will deliver a sustainable future" (Environment Council News, February 1995:1). The Forum focused on 'sensible dialogue', and 'mediation and facilitation' in order to 'maintain a balance between different interest groups and ensure ownership of sustainable decisions' (Environment Council News, February 1995:1). The Environment Council's development history provides an indication of organisation's understanding of the role of collective decision-making; participation is clearly seen as an essential tool in achieving sustainable practice.

The Sustainable Business Forum drew on the expertise and learning of the Environmental Resolve group within The Environment Council. Environmental

Resolve was developed in the early 1990s and was described as helping to "prevent and resolve environmental disputes using processes such as environmental dispute resolution, mediation and facilitation" (The Environment Council News, April 1993:1). Environment Resolve was initially made up of a small committee of mediators, facilitators and decision process engineers. At the outset, Environmental Resolve applied itself to low-conflict situations, often based around reviewing activities or internal company projects, for example a review of the Shell Better Britain Campaign (Acland *et al.* 1999). The first major debate Environmental Resolve addressed concerned the management of Lake Windermere in the Lake District in March 1993. At this time the decision-making process was referred to as 'consensus building'; it was not until 1995 during the Brent Spar oil platform debate that the term Stakeholder Dialogue was first used.

The successful resolution of the Brent Spar decommissioning debate launched Stakeholder Dialogue and The Environment Council as the leading environmental charity undertaking such work. The successful process also marked a change in emphasis within The Environment Council. A 70% increase in turnover during 1995 was seen as being "due in no small part to the work of Environmental Resolve" (The Environment Council News April, 1995:1).

3.4.2 The Environment Council in practice

Throughout The Environment Council's short but dynamic history two critical elements in the delivery of its approach to participatory decision-making have remained the same. The first is the stated independence of the organisation and, building on that, the second is its association with a team of professional facilitators.

The independent role The Environment Council adopts is influential in determining the nature of the participatory processes they apply. The emphasis placed on independence has its origins in the consensus building and dispute resolution fields that ground current Stakeholder Dialogue practice. In fact, before The Environment Council adopted the term 'facilitator' they used the phrase 'independent third party' or 'mediator' (Baines 1995). The focus on the independent third party reflects an important distinction that

The Environment Council makes between the *process* of participatory decision-making and the *content* of the dialogue. The independence of a third party rests on its ability to remain outside of discussion regarding content. As a result any such third party, mediator or facilitator, focuses exclusively on the design and implementation of the participatory decision-making process. The independent role adopted by The Environment Council requires the funder of a particular project to acknowledge the uncertain nature of Stakeholder Dialogue; an independent convenor can make only limited guarantees regarding the nature of any output. The importance of this consideration for the funder depends on the level of control they exert over the process, which in turn stems from the strength of any predetermined goals.

The independence of a facilitating party is critical in ensuring the participatory process provides the space in which trust, new networks of communication and understanding can flourish. If the facilitator is perceived as being simply the hired voice of the funder or problem owner then the process immediately opens itself up to accusations of manipulation and strategic decision-making. For this reason the facilitators used by The Environment Council are employed on a contract basis intended to reinforce their independence from the funders. In a review of the principles and characteristics of Stakeholder Dialogue, Andrew Acland sets out additional reasons why independence is important: he says; "because we [facilitators] do not take positions on substantive issues we can ensure that meetings are as a balanced and even-handed as possible by, for example, preventing particular individuals or interest groups dominating" (Acland 2001:25). In an earlier review of Stakeholder Dialogue Acland *et al* (1999:23) describe independence as "a vital factor in reassuring stakeholders that the dialogue process will not be abused or manipulated".

3.5 Stakeholder Dialogue

The development of Figure 3.2 allows Stakeholder Dialogue to be defined in terms of the three critical dimensions that describe the variation in participatory processes. However, this broad definition needs to be developed in order to understand the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue and to ensure the thesis applies an appropriate evaluation strategy. As with many of the terms associated with participatory decision-making,

Stakeholder Dialogue exists in the absence of any widely accepted and commonly understood definition. Acland (2000:6) offers a broad and inclusive definition when he describes the process as "a designed and facilitated process involving stakeholders". However, this description does little to distinguish Stakeholder Dialogue from many similar participatory processes focused on stakeholder participation. With this in mind, the following discussion aims to establish a more explicit understanding of Stakeholder Dialogue based on its origins and application.

3.5.1 Origins of Stakeholder Dialogue

The Environment Council developed the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue in recognition that complex, multi-party environmental decisions could no longer be made on a basis of 'decide-announce-and-defend' (DAD). A small group of individuals came together within The Environment Council in an attempt to offer a new and innovative approach to address environmental conflicts. The members of this group, who went on to form Environmental Resolve, were the first independent facilitators to be used by The Environment Council. Two facilitators in particular provided Stakeholder Dialogue with its intellectual grounding. Andrew Acland brought considerable experience in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and mediation, whilst Allen Hickling came from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations where he had helped develop and write on the Strategic Choice Approach to decision-making. Both had written important texts[12] in their relevant fields providing Stakeholder Dialogue with the necessary reasoning and means to address complex, multi-party conflictual decision-making.

The extent to which Stakeholder Dialogue reflects its basis in either the ADR or SCA approaches to decision-making depends on the particular context in which it is applied and, in particular, the level of conflict involved. Although there are significant similarities between the two approaches they nevertheless provide Stakeholder Dialogue with a sufficiently broad basis to allow a diverse range of applications. Perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two approaches introduced by Acland and Hickling to The Environment Council to is found in the purpose of their application. At

[12] Andrew Acland wrote *Resolving Disputes Without Going to Court: A consumer guide to Alternative Dispute Resolution* (1995) and Allen Hickling co-authored the second edition of *Planning under Pressure: The Strategic Choice Approach* (1997).

a crude level, SCA is concerned with addressing uncertainty and managing the complexity inherent in multi-party decision-making. ADR, on the other hand was developed as an alternative to litigation and adversarial negotiation, and as a result is specifically concerned with mutually beneficial conflict resolution.

3.5.1.1 Strategic Choice Approach (SCA)

The origins of the Strategic Choice Approach are grounded in pragmatism and the empirical work of the Tavistock Institute (Friend & Hickling 1997). SCA was developed as a means of addressing "the challenges of planning in an uncertain world" (Friend & Hickling 1997: 1). It is this acknowledgement of the inherent uncertainty in contemporary decision-making that provides a key determinate in the way Stakeholder Dialogue is practised.

Attempts to address uncertainty require the decision-making process to be seen in both greater breadth and depth than a traditional hierarchical decision structure allows. The need for more information and greater co-ordination demands greater inclusion than is offered by the limited participation of management processes involving only a minority of interested parties. SCA identifies four complementary 'modes' of decision activity in an effort to manage uncertainty throughout the decision-making process.

1. *Shaping* of problems.
2. *Designing* possible courses of action to address these problems.
3. *Comparing* these various course of action in light of what their consequences might be.
4. *Choosing* – establishing commitments to action through time.

The depth offered by this framework is complemented by the *strategic* focus of the approach. Rather than referring to a "prior view of some hierarchy of levels" the term *strategic* refers to the "connectedness of one decision to another" (Friend & Hickling 1997:2). Strategic Choice actively searches out the connections linking decisions together "whether they be at a broader level or a more specific action level; whether they be more immediate or longer term; and no matter who may be responsible for them" (Friend & Hickling 1997:2). The attempt to remove uncertainty through

identifying networks of connections between decisions can be seen at the heart of Stakeholder Dialogue's focus on inclusive decision-making. Stakeholder Dialogue seeks to engage with those issues, individuals and organisations that, in the language of SCA, would have once been regarded as externalities.

Stakeholder Dialogue's basis in SCA also provides it with an appreciation of the intangible products derived from a collective decision-making process. Invisible products, such as mutual respect, trust and extended networks of communication are formed as…

> 'people's limited perceptions of problems, possibilities, implications and uncertainties gradually become replaced by richer perceptions through the sharing of views within an interactive group setting' (Friend & Hickling 1997:276).

At a more practical level, many of the techniques and methods of Stakeholder Dialogue have their origin in the Strategic Choice Approach. The "open technology" (Friend & Hickling 1997:84) of SCA stresses the value of "people working together in an exploratory way, so as to transcend established boundaries of responsibilities and specialist expertise" (Friend & Hickling 1997:84). The term facilitator is defined and the effective use of rooms, walls, paper and pens is also described. A number of the terms used to describe SCA techniques have found their way into The Environment Council's training manuals.

3.5.1.1 Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) originated in the USA in the late 1970s. The development of this new approach was in direct response to the perceived failures of the litigation process. It became increasingly clear to those involved in environmental public policy debates that litigation was expensive, time-consuming and damaging to relationships (Acland 1995, Susskind & Secunda 1998). In the UK, the process of ADR has more often than not focused on dispute prevention, and consequently is more commonly referred to as 'consensus building' or 'collaborative processes' (Ingram 1998). It is this terminology that was originally used to describe the process of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Much of ADR is rooted in mediation (Acland 1995), and the principles of mediation contribute to the consensus-building roots of Stakeholder Dialogue. Below I set out these principles as described by Acland (1995:34).

1. Mediation is voluntary.
2. Mediation uses an independent third party.
3. Mediation is confidential.
4. Mediation is without prejudice.
5. Whilst the process of mediation is non-binding, the result has whatever force the participants choose to give it.

In addition to these principles, mediation is designed and delivered on a case-by-case basis; just as with Stakeholder Dialogue, "each one [process of mediation] has to be designed around what would help the parties reach agreement" (Acland 1995:35).

Stakeholder Dialogue is essentially concerned with the process of decision-making and constantly distances itself from issues of content. This process/content division is integral to Stakeholder Dialogue and can be traced back to the work of Fisher and Ury (1981). Fisher and Ury presented an original alternative to positional bargaining known as Principled Negotiation. Just as with Stakeholder Dialogue, the aim was to ensure win/win conclusions for all participants. One of the four basic points of Principled Negotiation was "separate the people from the problem" (Fisher & Ury 1981:11). This has evolved into the Stakeholder Dialogue principle of separating the process from the content. The logic behind the division remains much the same, in particular that the process of decision-making should allow the participants to "attack the problem, not each other" (Fisher & Ury 1981:11).

Fisher and Ury (1981:11) describe another point of Principled Negotiation as a "focus on interest, not positions". It is this understanding that a participant's position is only the surface of their motivating interest that drives much of what Stakeholder Dialogue attempts to achieve. The importance of identifying these underlying, motivating

interests is developed by Acland (1995) who argues that all participants share common ground and by uncovering this Stakeholder Dialogue is able to build agreement[13].

While many of the principles of Stakeholder Dialogue can be traced back to Mediation and Principled Negotiation there remains an important distinction between these two sets of decision processes. Mediation and Principled Negotiation are offered as an alternative to litigation, a process that involves only *two* parties. Even if a claim has been filed by multiple parties, the process is between a representative of their collective interests and the defendant. Stakeholder Dialogue's goal of engineering sustainable decisions from complex multi-party issues, on the other hand, demands a much wider level of participation.

3.5.2 Principles of Stakeholder Dialogue

One reason for the loose definition of Stakeholder Dialogue is the absence of any established set of principles underpinning its use. Throughout The Environment Council's publications various sets of principles are described. For instance, the training manual *Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue* describes eight principles, *Working with Your Stakeholders* lists eleven, *Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* ten, and an article by Andrew Acland describes a different ten (TEC undated TEC 2000, Acland 2000, Acland *et al.* 1999, Acland 2001). In many cases the 'principles' are actually characteristics of practice or statements describing the aims of Stakeholder Dialogue. Although there is substantial replication between the various lists offered there is clearly a lack of any common understanding within The Environment Council as to the defining principles of Stakeholder Dialogue. This has significant implications for the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue, ensuring that there is considerable variation in implementation depending on the particular facilitator and the team within The Environment Council. It also has important implications for evaluation, making it harder to establish any link between the principles of Stakeholder Dialogue and the products, and thus challenging any measure of effectiveness.

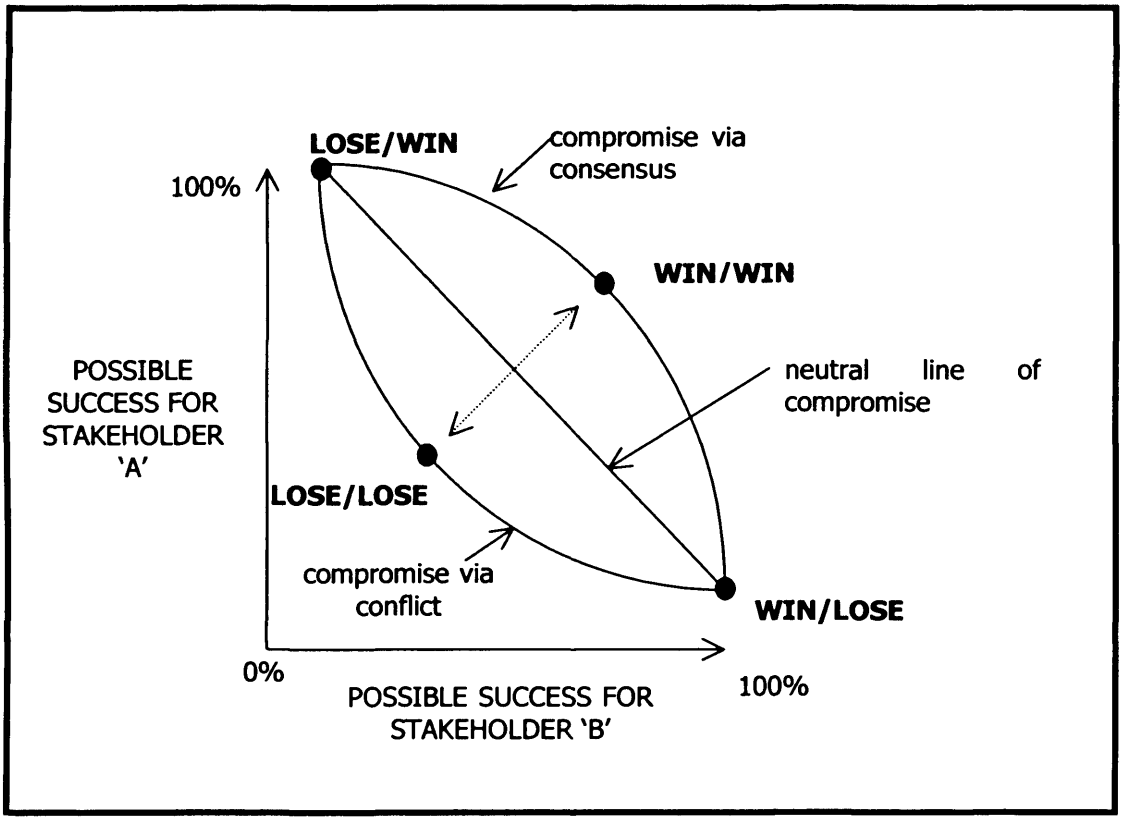
[13] This has strong parallels with the discussion on "planning through consensus building" developed by Innes (1996:460)

Below I provide a set of Stakeholder Dialogue principles as they are found in The Environment Council literature.[14] These nine statements emerge from The Environment Council literature as the key principles of Stakeholder Dialogue. Appendix A offers a complete list of principles as they are described in The Environment Council literature.

I. **Consensus is compromise.** (*Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue undated*)

The most effective way to illustrate what is meant by this apparently contradictory statement is by the diagram below. The diagram shows how a process can achieve two very different forms of compromise depending on the route it takes.

Figure 3.3 Win/Win



Firstly, it can be go through a process of conflict that offers less than the neutrally negotiated compromise because of the "inevitable disabling side-effects (and their associated costs) such as: anger; desire for revenge; disempowerment; resentment and

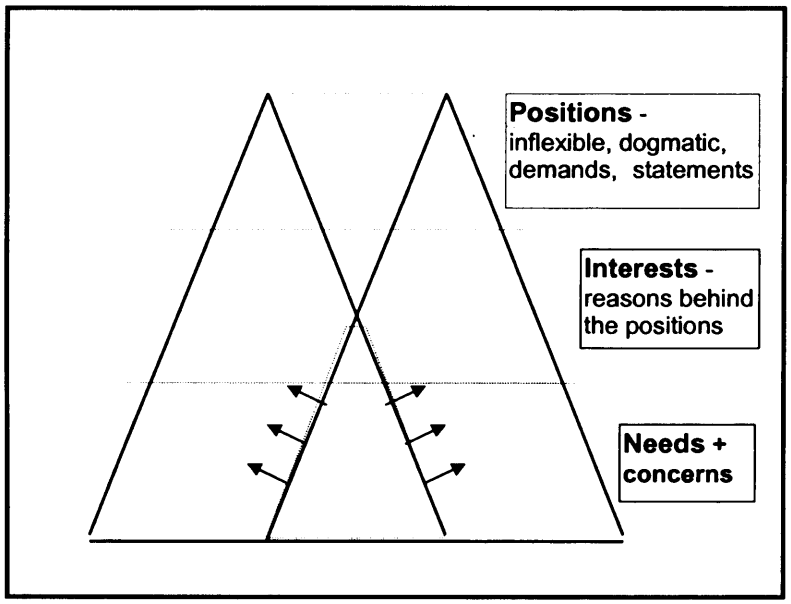
[14] In attempting to present a picture of how Stakeholder Dialogue is constructed and practiced by TEC the review of principles limits itself to describing each principle in turn as they are explained by TEC. A discussion regarding the relationship between the principles and products can be found in Chapter 9. Principles are not described in any order of priority

distrust" (TEC undated:2). The alternative route to compromise is represented by the upper curve; this plots the path of a Stakeholder Dialogue process, and delivers a win/win conclusion. It is in describing this process of moving towards a win/win situation that The Environment Council links Stakeholder Dialogue to the transformative, invisible, intangible benefits of participatory decision-making.

> "Seeking compromise via *consensus*, on the other hand, is based on the idea that there is added value to be gained from the synergy of working together. Creative ways of settling the matter lead to so-called 'win/win' outcomes which are represented in the diagram by the superior curve. The gain is enhanced by the generation of invisible benefits such as commitment, mutual understanding and extended networks". (TEC undated :2 original emphasis)

II. Positions, interests and needs. (*Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue undated*)

Figure 3.4 The PIN Diagram



This principle is first described by Fisher & Ury (1981) in one of the original texts on Alternative Dispute Resolution. The above diagram is used extensively by The Environment Council to describe the principle and first appeared in Andrew Acland's book on Alternative Dispute Resolution (Acland 1995). Under this principle, Stakeholder Dialogue is built on an understanding that it is possible to identify common ground amongst participants which in turn provides "the foundations on which problems will be solved and consensus will be built" (TEC undated:7). Through a

transparent and deliberative process it is possible to uncover the interests that underlie an individual's position. This is an important step if participants are to gain a real shared understanding of each other's positions. Stakeholder Dialogue attempts to move beyond interests to uncover the needs and values of the participants and in doing so establish common ground amongst participants. The identification of common ground is regarded as a critical foundation in ensuring the process generates commonly acceptable products.

III. Process and Content division (*Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue undated*)

This principle ensures that Stakeholder Dialogue identifies two elements in any human interaction: process and content. Although the boundaries between the two can become blurred, Stakeholder Dialogue remains concerned with only the process element. The Environment Council describes process as:

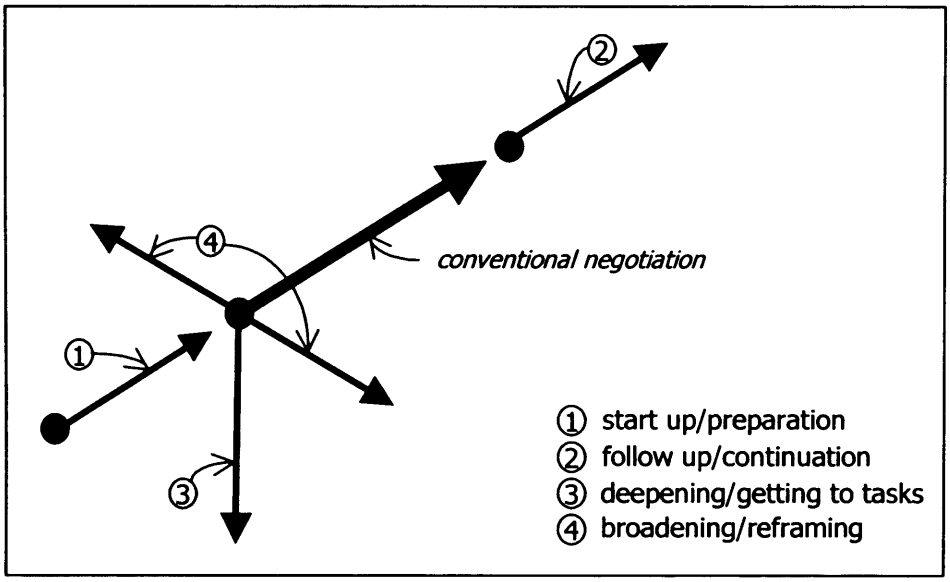
"how people are behaving; who is talking to whom, and when they are doing it – the pattern of their meeting; and how they are dealing with the issues on their agenda." (TEC undated:12)

Stakeholder Dialogue avoids becoming involved in discussions over content in an attempt to maintain its independence and prevent accusations of manipulation. Problems can arise in making the distinction between process and content when the participatory process itself becomes the subject (content) of discussion.

IV. Extending the paradigm (*Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue undated, Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999)

Just as with the previous principles, the 'Extending the Paradigm' principle describes how Stakeholder Dialogue moves beyond conventional negotiation. Again, The Environment Council use a diagram to describe what is meant by this principle (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Extending the paradigm



In particular arrows 3 and 4 describe two important features of Stakeholder Dialogue. Arrow 3 represents Stakeholder Dialogue's focus on ensuring that the process engages with the interests of participants rather than their positions. Arrow 4 describes Stakeholder Dialogue's goal of inclusion. An inclusive dialogue allows for broader discussions and the introduction of new, and reframing of old, ideas. It is through the options offered by arrows 3 and 4 that Stakeholder Dialogue attempts to reach mutually acceptable conclusions.

V. **Voluntary involvement** (*Working with your stakeholders* 2000, *Dialogue* May 2000)

Stakeholder Dialogue is a voluntary participatory process. Unlike some participatory processes there are no financial incentives to participate; "people take part in the process because they want to" Acland (2000:14). Depending on the particular case and the participants involved Stakeholder Dialogue can involve investing large amounts of time and energy in ensuring key individuals and organisations engage with the process.

VI. **Inclusiveness** (*Working with your stakeholders* 2000, *Dialogue* May 2000, *>elements* 2001)

Stakeholder Dialogue "tries to bring everybody (all stakeholders) into the action – especially those who usually get left out, such as minority stakeholders" (Acland

2000:14). Whenever there is any doubt regarding the participation of a particular individual or group the "default decision is towards inclusivity" (Acland 2001:25).

VII. People attend as equals (*>elements* 2001)

Participants must be considered as equals if Stakeholder Dialogue's commitment to inclusion and broadening debate are to be effective. If stakeholders can participate as equals "this means, in particular, that ideas can be judged on their merits not on their source" (Acland 2001:25). This principle is backed up by a common ground rule that ensures specific points cannot be attributed to individual participants.

VIII. Stakeholder Dialogue is a two way process (*>elements* 2001, *Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999)

This principle captures the important deliberative element of Stakeholder Dialogue. Formal one-way presentations are limited to the absolute minimum. Instead the process is designed around creating opportunities for interactive communication between at least two people. The commitment to dialogue is based on an understanding that "real relationships based on mutual understanding and leading to trust, evolve out of two-way communication and a consistency of word and deed" (Acland 2001:26).

IX. The process values interests, feelings, needs and fears (*>elements* 2001, *Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999)

This principle captures Stakeholder Dialogue's attempt to understand what participants want and what they bring to the process. Stakeholder Dialogue "values everything that is said without pre-judging what is 'real', 'important' or 'rational'" (Acland 2001:26). The aim is to acknowledge the background and incentives of each participant before the process engages in a discussion regarding the 'facts'.

3.5.3 Practice of Stakeholder Dialogue

Stakeholder Dialogue varies a great deal in the techniques and tools that are used from one case to the next. The selection of these participatory tools depends on the aim of the process, the facilitator and the experience and commitment of the participants. Although different techniques can be used to establish the process and 'open up the

dialogue' they all attempt to ensure that the process offers a transparent, inclusionary and deliberative means of participatory decision-making. Examples of such techniques are described below.

- *Metaplan* This technique is a development of the established Plenary Session and Brainstorming methods. According to The Environment Council training manual, "it gives participants the satisfaction of seeing their work and progress immediately. It is used particularly at the beginning of meetings to identify issues and problems that concern participants" (Acland 2000:43). Although the technique may vary, it remains based around a simple structure. Participants are given a number of Post-it notes on which they are asked to write a single word or phrase that expresses their concern or interest in the situation under discussion. The Post-it notes are collected and stuck on a flip chart sheet attached to the wall. The participants are then asked to help group the Post-it notes, remove duplication and identify common themes. This is usually done via the facilitator.

- *Carousel* This technique divides participants up into sub-groups with the intention of getting "many different people discussing several subjects in a limited amount of time" (Acland 2000:49). The participants are divided up into between three and five equal-sized groups. Each group starts at a particular 'station'; there are as many stations as there are groups. At each station there is a flip chart sheet with a different issue heading. The participants are asked to record their thoughts on the issue at the station they are at. After a certain amount of time the groups move round to another station and add their thoughts on this new issue to those of the previous group. After each group has addressed all the issues the collected information is presented to everybody in a plenary session. This may be done by either the participants or the facilitator.

- *Common Grounding* This technique is used to establish where common ground exists amongst stakeholders. A matrix is drawn out on flip chart sheets and then attached to the wall. Listed across the top are all the participants and down one side are all the possible options for resolving issues identified at an earlier stage. Participants are asked to place a mark in the appropriate box representing their preferred option for

each issue. The finished matrix identifies which options have broad support, which have no support and which require further discussion.

Appendix B provides three short case studies of previous Stakeholder Dialogue processes and identifies the associated products.

3.5.4 Products of Stakeholder Dialogue

Stakeholder Dialogue's emphasis on delivering substantive changes ensures that the principal products will depend very much on the aim of the particular process. However, The Environment Council identifies a set of more generic products which the *process* should deliver (Acland 2000). These are listed below, as they are described by The Environment Council. Stakeholder Dialogue:

1. produces results which are better than could have been achieved without it;
2. produces an agreed, timed and costed action plan;
3. allows all stakeholders to voice their needs, interests, fears, and concerns;
4. satisfies at least some of the needs, interests and concerns of all stakeholders;
5. produces results which feel legitimate and are owned by all stakeholders;
6. builds trust and creates good relationships;
7. improves communication and mutual understanding; and
8. makes the next process easier (Acland *et al.* 1999, Acland 2001).

The above list illustrates that in addition to substantive instrumental results, successful Stakeholder Dialogue is expected to deliver the less tangible transformative products associated with participatory decision-making. It also suggests that The Environmental Council does not regard the overarching purpose of delivering sustainable decisions as detracting from the potential of Stakeholder Dialogue to deliver transformative products.

3.5.5 The Facilitator

Although the particular techniques vary from case to case the role of the facilitator remains largely the same. Table 3.1 describes the various roles a facilitator is required

to play during Stakeholder Dialogue. To be recognised as a facilitator for The Environment Council an individual must complete the six-day training course in Stakeholder Dialogue and have environmental facilitation experience.

In an early review describing the work of Environmental Resolve, facilitators were defined as: "...an independent third party who guides the consensus building process. The facilitator helps interested parties, who are willing to work together, to find mutually acceptable solutions." (Baines 1995:3). A more concise definition describes a successful facilitator as: "...one who listens intently and then asks the right person the right question at the right moment" (Acland 2000:24).

Table 3.1 The role of the facilitator

Facilitator's Role	Skills
Designer	Identifying stakeholders and issues, designing processes and events, grouping stakeholders, choosing techniques.
Intervener	Verbal and non-verbal communication, guiding, encouraging, challenging, balancing power.
Recorder	Writing legibly, summarising, managing information and paper.
Monitor	Observing, analysing, evaluating progress.
Supporter	Providing equipment, making domestic arrangements, co-ordinating relations with press and others outside the process.
Key skills for all roles	Listening, empathising, clarifying, questioning, affirming, non-verbal communication, observing, process management, time management and adaptability.

The increased use of Stakeholder Dialogue has seen the facilitator increasingly position himself as a professional and, in doing so, make all the ties to expert knowledge that this term invokes. As a result, facilitators occupy a position of some power, both in the preparation and implementation of Stakeholder Dialogue. Typically, the process for a Stakeholder Dialogue case is presented by the facilitator to a small steering committee of stakeholders for discussion. The opportunity to influence the design or running of

the process is limited to making changes to the template provided by the facilitator. However, in the majority of cases a lack of experience amongst participants, coupled with the professional status of the facilitator, ensures few significant suggestions are likely. Acland (2001:25) offers an explanation for the influence enjoyed by the facilitator when he says, "the vital attributes for successfully designing and managing a dialogue are process rather than content skills". The facilitator guides the participants through the various participatory techniques at their disposal in order to move forward towards the agreed goal.

The responsibility for producing an independent summary of the Stakeholder Dialogue meeting lies with the facilitator and their support team. This record usually takes the form of a photo report describing the flip-chart sheets used to collate information. The facilitator's role as recorder reinforces the independent status of Stakeholder Dialogue while at the same time potentially diluting the level of control offered to the participants. In reviewing the responsibilities of the facilitator it becomes increasingly clear that while their role helps to ensure the independence of the process it also has the potential to limit the effective delegation of power to the participants.

Although The Environment Council run a series of facilitator training courses it is acknowledged that, to a degree, the effectiveness of the facilitator depends on their personal and social skills. Baines (1995) recognised this when he wrote "a successful outcome to the process depends to a great extent on the interpersonal skills and techniques used by the mediator". Certainly it would appear that the effectiveness of the participatory approach in generating any internal energy or motivation is largely dependent on the skills of the facilitator. In summing up the part played by the facilitator in Stakeholder Dialogue it is evident that their role is critical to the success of the process. They must be seen to maintain the independence of the process, ensure that the process design is fair to all participants and moves the dialogue towards a goal; they must also maintain the energy and motivation of the participants, choose the appropriate technique at the right stage of the process and be aware of each and every participant. This obviously places a significant demand on the skills of the facilitator. Stakeholder Dialogue attempts to tackle this by using a team of facilitators whenever the number of participants rises above ten to twelve individuals. However, although having a team of facilitators does reduce the dependence on any individual facilitator, it

does not address the fact that a body other than the participants largely determines the design and implementation of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Chapter 4

Evaluating participatory decision-making

"The slippery nature of causation makes the move from description to explanation extremely difficult" (Wirt, Morey & Brakeman 1971:4 cited in Syme and Sadler 1994: 526).

Introduction

In order to apply an appropriate evaluation to the principles and practices of Stakeholder Dialogue the thesis must identify a suitable approach from the diverse evaluation literature. With this aim in mind, Chapter 4 presents a critical review of the present state of evaluation research. This review serves two goals; it identifies relevant challenges and possible approaches to evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue while also presenting a critique of the multifaceted literature on evaluating participatory processes. In doing so it provides Chapter 5 with the necessary grounding with which to develop a suitable evaluation strategy for Stakeholder Dialogue.

The existing literature on evaluating public participation has much to offer this assessment of Stakeholder Dialogue. However, it is equally apparent that it does not offer any straight answers and that the final evaluation approach will need to appreciate the multiple purposes and perspectives behind the various methods suggested by the literature. This chapter plots a route through the literature that provides an opportunity to identify those aspects relevant to the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue and in doing so, offers an explanation for the approach set out in Chapter 5. The chapter is organised into four sections. The first section poses the question 'what is evaluation?', while the second reviews the various arguments for evaluation research. The chapter then goes on to review the challenges of evaluating participatory processes. The final section forms the bulk of the chapter and looks at the different evaluation strategies that have been applied to the challenge of assessing participatory decision-making.

This study presents the first attempt to develop an evaluation strategy in the eleven years The Environment Council has been practicing Stakeholder Dialogue. The focus on a particular method of participatory decision-making marks an important distinction between the aim of this evaluation and much of the work described by the evaluation literature. The search for a 'fitness of purpose' amongst the range of participatory practices has been the 'Holy Grail' of evaluation research. This has been addressed through the development of predominantly process-derived criteria that seek to link features of process to generic themes of context (see Delbridge *et al.* 2002, Renn *et al.* 1995). The focus of this thesis on a particular method of participation, rather than on public participation more generally, places the emphasis on establishing assessments of effectiveness, impacts, outputs, outcomes and goal attainment. In developing "the specific form and scope" of the evaluation the thesis is guided by "the nature of the program being evaluated" (Rossi *et al.* 1999:24). In this case the program is Stakeholder Dialogue and as a result the criteria and indicators used in the evaluation must reflect the principles, practice and aims of that program. The absence of any previous assessment of Stakeholder Dialogue, coupled with the need to tailor the evaluation to the process, ensures it is not possible to simply adopt an existing method of appraisal. Instead, the review of evaluation methods that follows allows the thesis to identify suitable practice from amongst the various methods that have been applied to assessments of public participation and policy development processes in recent years.

The literature on the evaluation of participatory decision-making is characterised by its lack of cohesion and the limited number of empirical studies (Pimbert & Wakeford 2001, Beierle & Konisky 2001, Beierle & Konisky 2000, Moote *et al.* 1997, Petts & Leach 2000, Rowe *et al.* 2001, Santos & Chess 2003). As a result there remains considerable uncertainty as to what makes for 'good' public participation (Santos & Chess 2003). Those empirical studies that do exist describe a range of approaches built on a diffuse literature such as program evaluation (Chess 2000, Rosener 1978), critical theory (Webler 1995), risk communication (Rowe & Frewer 2000), public participation (Fiorino 1990, Webler 1995, Rowe & Frewer 2000) and democratic theory (Fiorino 1990). Not surprisingly, given the relatively few empirical studies and the lack of any common root, the literature has yet to establish an accepted framework for evaluation (Warburton 1997, Innes & Booher 1999, Guston 1999, Oakley 1991, Syme & Sadler 1994, Sommer 2000, Beierle 1998, Chess 2000, Sewell & Phillips 1979, Jones *et al.*

2001, Interact 2001). In contrast to the limited number of empirical studies there are numerous discussion papers highlighting the need for evaluation and presenting the challenges and benefits of evaluation (e.g. Yosie & Herbst 1998, Rowe & Frewer 2000, Barnes 1999, Syme & Sadler 1994).

Along with the relatively inadequate level of empirical study, the evaluation literature is characterised by a number of tensions regarding evaluation practice. One such debate is that between participatory evaluation and independent evaluation. Barnes (1999:73) argues that "the evaluation process itself should adopt participatory methods consistent with the methods of participation". This is an approach supported by a number of authors such as Allen (1997), Petts & Leach (2000) and Sommer (2000). Todd (2001:98), on the other hand, suggests that there are "risks involved in failing to evaluate the practice objectively. To have credibility, evaluations must be done objectively...we must conduct them scientifically without concern for how the results will be used or who the evaluation is for". A parallel discussion to this is to be seen in the varying emphasis placed on the learning or judgement component of evaluation. Barnes (1999:73) stresses that "the emphasis should be placed on learning rather than judgement". For other authors, the role of evaluation is very much to determine effectiveness or success (e.g. Moore 1996, Todd 2001, Carnes *et al.* 1998).

Alongside these debates is a recognition that the evaluation literature is undermined by "a desire to promote EDS (environmental dispute settlement[15]) on the one hand and a desire to conduct an objective evaluation on the other" (Todd 2001:98). For instance, in a recent paper, Connick & Innes (2003:117) stated that "the authors have come to believe, along with many others in the policy world, that collaborative dialogue among stakeholders is the most productive way to address many complex and controversial policy questions", before going on to present a positive evaluation of three "collaborative dialogues on water policy making in California" (Connick & Innes 2003:95). The apparent conflict in such an evaluation appears to stem from an understanding that an evaluation is an opportunity to both promote and assess

[15] Environmental Dispute Settlement (EDS) is one of a number of terms such as Alternative Dispute Resolution, Consensus Building and Participatory Decision Making that describe a range of participatory approaches to decision-making. Many of these terms are used interchangeably in the literature and a paper on any one such term will inevitably reference papers using alternative terms.

participatory processes (Scher 1996). This perspective on evaluation characterised much of the early input from The Environment Council into this studentship.

4.1 What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a contextually embedded form of social inquiry and as such is defined by the questions and values found within "the multiple, often competing, potential audiences" with which it engages (Greene 1994:531). This context-dependent purpose has meant "there is no single, agreed upon definition for evaluation" (Stecher & Davis 1987:22). The absence of any single definition is borne out by the thirty-three models of evaluation set out by Patton and backed up by his conclusion that it is not "practical to adopt a single definition of evaluation" (Patton 1982:37). However, within the established evaluation literature, often referred to as program evaluation (Greene 1994, Rossi *et al.* 1999), there is a common understanding that, at its root, evaluation is concerned with valuing (Scriven 1967) and judging (Stake 1967). These twin goals have established evaluation as an inherently political practice while also providing the link with the policy making process that, in turn, defines so much of existing evaluation methodology.

Definitions of evaluation are noticeable by their absence from assessments of participatory decision-making processes (Chess 2000 provides an exception to the norm). Those papers that do provide definitions describe a shift in focus away from the valuing and judging emphasised by the program evaluation literature. Interact[16] (2001:1) describe evaluation as a "process of assessment which identifies and analyses the nature and impact of process and programmes". As it stands, this definition describes little more than a process of description focused on the impacts of participation. The majority of evaluations concerned with participatory decision-making have been developed in an academic context significantly removed from the traditional close association with policy designers experienced by program evaluation. Rather than being applied in order to contribute to a policy design process, evaluations

[16] "InterAct is an alliance of experienced practitioners, researchers, writers and policy makers committed to putting participatory, deliberative and co-operative approaches at the heart of debate, decision-making and action across the UK" (InterAct 2001)

are seen as a means of learning; "the overall purpose of evaluation should emphasise learning rather than judgement" (Barnes 1999:73, see also Petts & Leach 2000).

4.2 Why evaluate participatory decision-making?

There is no single reason for evaluation: the multiple purposes to participatory decision-making suggest a multiple of different reasons for evaluation. If the evaluation goes on to acknowledge the individual motives behind each participant's involvement then there are an unknown number of different potential reasons for evaluation. But the primary purpose for an evaluation is to answer a question regarding the performance of a particular 'treatment', be it a policy, program, event or workshop. The question or questions vary between the often competing, potential audiences, ensuring that the reason for the evaluation depends on which audience the evaluation addresses.

> "Different evaluation methodologies are expressly orientated around the information needs of different audiences – from the macro program and cost effectiveness questions of policy makers to the micro questions of meaning for individual participants" (Greene 1994:531).

Although there is considerable variation in the motivations behind each evaluation of participation, a typology of program evaluation allows the thesis to identify three broad sets of reasons. The first of these requires the evaluation to establish the lines of cause and effect between the program and the products. The second asks the evaluation to compare the subject of the evaluation with potential alternatives. A third set of reasons can be seen in the traditional goals of promotion, efficiency and the increasing need for "evidence based practice" (Barnes 1999:61). I refer to this last category as *independent reasons* because the questions they ask are not defined by the stated goals of the program under assessment.

I. Linking process to product

"The goal of summative evaluation is to collect and to present information needed for summary statements and judgements about the program and its value" (Herman *et al.* 1987:16, see also Patton 1997). Evaluations of participatory decision-making of this kind are in the minority because, as Rowe & Frewer (2000:3) claim, the "quality of the output of any participation exercise is difficult to determine". Beierle (2002:740)

supports this explanation when he says, "assessing the quality of stakeholder-based decisions raises difficult issues about the purpose and appropriate evaluation of these decision processes". In an assessment if 239 case studies Beierle (2002) provides one of the few assessments of decision quality arising from participatory processes.

A similar summative study by Beierle & Konisky (2001:515) found that there did not appear to be an "obvious link between good participation and improvements in environmental quality". Although the apparent reason behind retrospective evaluations such as these is to test the various assumptions linking participatory processes to particular products, the challenges of separating context from process often mean they are limited to simply describing the strength and character of the outcomes. Despite these challenges, the driving reason behind the application of a summative evaluation must be to explain the relationship between process and products.

II. Identifying best practice

Lyons Morris *et al.* (1987:11) characterise the goals of formative evaluation as being concerned with "progress checks throughout the course of the program and to ensure that participants are learning what is expected and keeping to the anticipated pace". Very few evaluations of participatory processes have adopted this active research approach. There are many reasons for this but perhaps the two principal ones are the resistance to such approaches among process design practitioners, as they see it as undermining their expertise and secondly, the fact it is contrary to the organic and self-functioning nature that underpins a true participatory exercise. Although few evaluations have actively sought to act as 'process checks,' the great majority of evaluations have focused on assessing the process on "normative procedural grounds" (Beierle & Konisky 2001:515, Webler 1995:38). The key reason behind this approach to evaluation is an understanding that evaluation should provide the means to make comparisons between processes (e.g. Renn *et al.* 1995, Petts & Leach 2000, Coenen *et al.* 1998, Barnes 1999, Halvorsen 2001, Webler *et al.* 2001). Clark *et al.* (2001:9) describe this evaluation as "comparative process evaluation". The opportunity for comparison allows the evaluation to draw conclusions as to which participatory process is suitable in which contexts and in doing so moves towards the policy makers' goal of identifying the right method for the right situation.

III. Independent reasons for evaluation

Despite the fact these independent explanations are rarely made explicit, they can be influential in determining the nature of the approach used. Promoting the benefits of participation may be one such reason for evaluation. InterAct claim that the "practical benefits [of participation] are becoming well known....but there remains insufficient hard evidence of these benefits" (InterAct 2001:2). Ignoring the apparent contradiction in this statement, its suggestion that evaluation can be used to promote participation offers a clear reason for assessment. Evaluation also meets the ever-present demand for assessments of efficiency and financial reporting (InterAct 2001).

The particular perspective on why a participatory process should be evaluated will vary from participant to participant, depending on their understanding of the aims of the process and what they had hoped to gain from their involvement. Sommer (2000:485) identifies four broad groups of participants: organisations, funders, community and staff that all have different views on why a participatory process should be evaluated. The Environment Agency is an example of an organisation that has identified a set of criteria to match their particular reasons for evaluation (see Petts & Leach 2001).

It is clear that there are often complicated and competing answers to the question, 'why evaluate?' One reason for evaluation does not automatically preclude another. In the majority of situations there is no single answer, rather a series of reasons, each demanding particular questions be answered by the evaluation method. It is the relationship between the various reasons for evaluation that plays an influential role in determining the evaluation approach.

4.3 The challenges of evaluating participation

> "the participation concept is complex and value laden; there are no widely held criteria for judging success and failure; there are no agreed-upon evaluation methods; there are few reliable measurement tools" (Rosener 1983:45, cited in Beierle 1998)

The challenge of evaluating participation, as set out by Rosener twenty years ago, remains the same today. In fact, the rise in use of participatory methods has simply added to the challenge. In 1991 Oakley recognised the evaluation of public

participation in development projects to be so challenging as to be "almost unworkable" (Oakley 1991:230). Others within the development literature have suggested that it may not be possible to develop a framework of evaluation for participatory development projects (Rahman 1983). However, despite the fact that the challenges of evaluation have been widely recognised throughout the development of participatory practices, there is limited consensus as to what these challenges actually are. This is because the difficulty of effectively addressing all challenges ensures that a study will only identify those that it has been designed to overcome, ensuring there are few comprehensive reviews. In effect, rather than overcoming these challenges, evaluations are often designed to avoid them; for instance: "given the quality of the output of any participatory exercise is difficult to determine, the authors suggest the need to consider which aspects of the process are desirable and then measure the presence or absence of these process aspects" (Rowe & Frewer 2000:3). Alongside the numerous challenges in focusing on public participation there are additional challenges common to all evaluations, especially those requiring access to individuals, communities and their knowledges.

The discussion below presents a review of these challenges and develops a framework to serve as a point of reference in the design of the evaluation approach set out in Chapter 5. The organisation of the various challenges is built around three categories. The first of these describes *challenges of design*; these are posed by the features of public participation. An example would be the embedded nature of public participation in a rich and complex context that challenges the methodology to separate the influence of the process from that context. The second group, which can in part be linked to the multifarious forms of participation, describes *challenges of information* arising from a lack of common understanding within the evaluation literature. An example would be the absence of any common definition of 'success'. These two categories are closely associated with one another and in many cases, the first amplifies those challenges described by the second because the multiple perspectives within any one participatory practice defy any singular definition. The third category describes the *common challenges* to evaluation. These are those demands that arise from any evaluation of 'social programs' (see Rossi *et al.* 1999) and include, for instance, the need to balance the demands of funders with the requirement to sympathetically address the subject of the evaluation.

4.3.1 Challenges of Design

Many of the methodological challenges posed by evaluating public participation are tied to the twin goals of collaborative decision-making, namely recognition that the process itself has a value, in addition to the value of any products. This demands an evaluation strategy that acknowledges the predicted transformative value of the process whilst also providing an objective assessment of the substantive products. To focus on one at the exclusion of the other offers only a partial evaluation, although the emphasis can vary depending on the purpose of the participatory process. There are, however, practical challenges in evaluating both process and products. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the time requirement. In order to establish a true measure of second and third order products[17] (Innes & Booher 1999) the evaluation must occur over a timescale that most funders would likely find prohibitively expensive (Hughes & Traynor 2000).

In attempting to establish the link between a process and its outputs, an evaluation is confronted by the distorting influence of 'context' (Chess & Purcell 1999, Connick & Innes 2003, Schalock 1995, Oakley 1991). The influence of context (Aranoff & Gunter 1994, Burgess *et al.*1998, Petts 2001) challenges the positivist experimental approach of traditional program evaluation. The "challenge arises as a consequence of the great number of variables that need manipulation" (Rowe & Frewer 2000:11) and led Syme and Sadler (1994:528) to describe their "worries.... that there is no control group". For them, being unable to apply the experimental template meant they would "never know with certainty whether *no* public involvement would have led to the same decision" (Syme & Sadler 1994:528 emphasis added). The challenge of addressing the influence of context is heightened by claims that "the impacts of participatory process may be cumulative – over time or over a range of different involvements" (InterAct 2001:11). Given this situation and the 'interconnectedness' of contemporary decision-making, can an evaluation ever accurately identify the context?

The challenge for evaluation is to both identify influential contextual factors and to separate their influence on the products from that of the participatory process. The

[17] This description reflects the fact that products of participation may emerge as a response to earlier more immediate products. However, with each 'generation' of products the link to the participatory process becomes harder to establish.

challenge of identifying outputs and linking them to the participatory process is compounded by the fact that some authors suggest "consensus building may be effective even when it does not accomplish what its participants or sponsors originally intended" (Innes & Booher 1999:413). An evaluation cannot develop traditional criteria of effectiveness for unintended outputs.

If an evaluation is to attempt to make a comprehensive assessment of effectiveness it must measure the occurrence and value placed on the transformative or intangible products of participatory decision-making. This requires the evaluation to develop ways of assessing ownership, commitment, trust and learning. Buchy & Hoverman (2000:23) recognise this challenge when they ask, "how does one measure whether a 'transformative' process has occurred within a community?" and "is it possible to objectively measure whether relationships have improved?" The challenge is not just in identifying the change but also in measuring the scale of this change. To do this in such a way as to satisfy a funder can only add to the design challenge. Judgement is required as to what level of change signifies a participatory process to have been effective; how does an evaluation arrive at a judgement of this kind and ensure it is then accepted by all parties?

Establishing measures of change introduces another design challenge. Evaluation requires baseline information to which the products of the participatory process can be referred. Even if the evaluation is initiated prior to the participation, a rare event, it is still faced with the challenge of identifying the original levels of trust and communication whilst not always knowing in advance who will participate or why they are participating in the process.

4.3.2 Challenges of information

Participation has been described as "an area that is fraught with definitional difficulties" (DETR 1998a:1). The absence of any commonly accepted argument for participatory decision-making (Beierle 1998) defines an environment in which multiple definitions of success and effectiveness co-exist (Moore 1996, Rosener 1981, Todd 2001). As Beierle asks,

> "are participatory programs intended to empower disenfranchised groups or to make it easier for government agencies to implement their programs? Is a program successful if it simply involves more of the public, or should it have resulted in demonstrably better decisions?" (Beierle 1998:2).

The challenge of establishing a measure of success is compounded by the often poorly defined objectives of engagement (Petts pers. comm. 16/01/01, Rosener 1978). While participatory processes are seen as tools of civic regeneration and a means of ensuring ownership and trust, these generic products are rarely identified amongst the goals of a particular process.

The absence of any commonly accepted definitions of success or effectiveness has meant that many studies simply provide descriptions rather than true assessments supported by empirical evidence (O'Leary 1995). Where attempts have been made to provide criteria of success this has simply presented fresh challenges to the evaluator. Todd (2001) provides twenty-six different indicators of effectiveness, while Moore (1996) describes success as 'multifaceted and sequential' and made up of four 'first dimensions of success' encompassing a further four 'second dimensions of success' (Moore 1996:153). The provision of predetermined criteria of success and effectiveness supports a top down approach to evaluation where assumptions must be made about the extent that these criteria capture the individual goals of participants. The alternative approach is to search for common understanding of success developed through negotiation between stakeholders (Warburton 1997). This approach delivers case specific criteria, offering only a limited opportunity to compare with other evaluations. Attempting to develop shared measures of success presents a circular challenge for the evaluator. Using a participatory process to identify a common measure of success, which will be then used in the evaluation of a participatory process, undermines the evaluation; the criteria are built on the same assumptions the evaluation sets out to test. Evaluation methodology is thus left to pick a path through the assumptions of top down evaluation on the one hand and the circular reasoning of bottom-up evaluation on the other.

The absence of any consensus regarding definitions of success has led to a "lack of standardized measurement instruments" (Rowe and Frewer 2000:11, see also Crosby *et al.* 1986). Although the debate surrounding the appropriate means of measurement has

rarely been made explicit (Oakley 1991 does provide a short discussion), it is represented by the discussion surrounding the use of quantitative and qualitative evaluation designs. A number of papers provide statistical measures of evaluation results (e.g. Beierle 2000, Blatner *et al* 2001, Halvorsen 2001) while others present interpretive discussions on the themes to emerge from the evaluation (e.g. Guston 1999). The evaluator is left to decide which evaluation approach is most suitable, a decision that is often determined by the demands of the funder. The problem of selecting appropriate measurement tools is compounded by the fact that a number of evaluations offer only very limited descriptions of their methods (e.g. Petts 2001) as they move directly from introducing criteria to presenting results.

The loosely defined practices of participatory decision-making challenge the evaluation to contribute beyond the immediate subject of the assessment. A particular participatory process may be applied in such a variety of ways (Rowe & Frewer 2000) that conclusions must be couched in either broad general terms or be reduced to being case specific.

4.3.3 Common challenges

Foremost amongst these common challenges is the need to be granted access to either the process or the results of a participatory process. In many cases this requires the facilitator to be prepared to place their expertise and methods under critical scrutiny. This is not something many are willing to do, partly because of their belief that the evaluators do not fully understand the process of participatory decision-making they facilitate (Hughes & Traynor 2000).

The goal of an independent and objective evaluation can be challenged if any particular party exerts control over the design of the evaluation method. In many cases funders may place certain demands on an evaluation that can effectively shift the focus of the research. This is particularly true when an evaluation of participation, designed to expose the thoughts, experiences and changes amongst participants, comes up against demands from the funders or key decision-makers for quantitative measures that

provide the necessary credibility the business or political contexts require (Barnes 1999).

An evaluation demands time and resources, quite often required from those with only a limited amount to gain from their involvement in the assessment. In this sense, an evaluation can be a negative exercise in extracting information to provide for only a minority of interested parties. An evaluation must be conscious of its impact on the study group and what it can offer to all those on whom it places demands.

4.4 How to evaluate participatory decision-making

The following section develops a comprehensive critique of the reasoning and methods that define current evaluation practice. To start with, the review highlights the various epistemological roots of evaluation and the multiple methods to which these give rise. This conceptual basis is further established through a review of principles of evaluation. Together the contrasting epistemologies and sometimes-divergent principles identify a scale of evaluation practice that varies between participatory evaluation and independent evaluation. This discussion of the theoretical foundations of evaluation methods provides an important basis from which this thesis can build a suitable evaluation.

4.4.1 Epistemologies of evaluation

The numerous challenges to evaluation have ensured that "no consistent method has emerged for evaluating the success of individual processes or the desirability of the many participatory methods" (Beierle 1998:2). Instead, there are multiple approaches representing a longstanding and pervasive epistemological debate within the field of evaluation research (see Pawson & Tilley 1997). Despite the apparent lack of consensus regarding best practice, this debate has received little attention from the participation literature. In light of this omission it is necessary to turn to discussions within the program evaluation literature in order to describe how the many challenges of evaluation have lead to competing epistemologies and how these in turn determine the variety in evaluation methodologies.

The current debate regarding appropriate evaluation practice reflects the various different questions posed by evaluation audiences coupled with a growing awareness from within the evaluation community of the shortcomings associated with the dominant experimental model. At a methodological level, this debate has been described as the '*quantitative–qualitative paradigm debate*' (Green 1994). The epistemological relationship between evaluator and evaluated is built on the basis of a particular set of ontological "claims and assumptions...about the nature of social reality" (Grix 2001:26). However, the competing political, social and scientific components of evaluation (Cronbach *et al.* 1980) introduce contrasting ontological foundations that ensure evaluation research has no single epistemological root. Instead, different evaluation methods have arisen from the interwoven relationship between the epistemological position of the researcher and the questions posed by the evaluation audience. Table 4.1 describes the conceptual framework behind the variety in evaluation practices.

Table 4.1 The epistemological roots of evaluation

Epistemological root	Key values	Methods	Evaluation questions
Positivism	Objective, quantitative, validity, causal understanding and 'independence'.	Grounded in the traditional experimental design based on controlled testing of variables.	Did the program produce the intended outcomes?
Interpretivism	Naturalistic, qualitative, holistic-inductive and pluralistic.	Case study methodology that invests in participant observation and in-depth interviews.	How did you benefit from your participation in the program?
Pragmatism	Utility, empiricism, practicality	Methodological flexibility, responsive and appropriateness.	How well does the program address the goals of the sponsor?
Normative	Emancipatory, social change, empowerment.	Participatory, historical analysis.	To what extent does the program impact on existing power structures?

The dominant tradition within program evaluation is grounded in an objectivist ontological understanding of social reality. This foundation prescribes a positivist approach to assessment and the application of the experimental model. In adopting this position, the evaluator intentionally removes him/herself from the political context to his/her work and claims the political neutrality of scientific rationality (Green & McClintock 1991). Campbell (1969) championed this approach, arguing that policy

decisions must emerge through a process of social experimentation with the emphasis placed on establishing internal validity and causal claims. This positivist position, and the priority it places on detached objectivity, emphasises the end-use of the evaluation over considerations of context and purpose of the program. Such an evaluation strategy emphasises assessment rather than learning and offers little scope to consider the peculiarities of a particular case, or to draw conclusions beyond the individual case. Evaluation methods founded on this epistemology have "sought to extend the experimental model...to evaluation research" (Rossi *et al.*1999:29). This has resulted in what are termed quasi-experimental impact assessments, which attempt to establish comparison groups whose role is analogous to that of a control in experimental design.

Although the experimental approach retains a prominent position within program evaluation it no longer stands uncontested. Since the 1960s an interpretivist epistemology has established itself within evaluation studies. The rise of the interpretivist theory of knowledge and its associated qualitative case study methods came about in response to two factors. The first was an increasing understanding that the "merit lies not in the form of the inquiry but in the relevance of the information" (Cronbach *et al.* 1980:7). In other words, rather than attempting to "meet research standards, evaluations should be dedicated to providing maximally useful information for decision makers" (Rossi *et al.* 1999:29). The experimental model was recognised as falling short of offering the necessary contextualised meaning required to inform policymaking. The second driver for change came from a growing appreciation of the "major fractures in the philosophical justification for experimental inquiry" (Green 1994:535). This debate from within the philosophy of science challenged the established premiums placed on objectivity, internal validity and causal claims by program evaluation at the time (see Campbell 1969). In response to these shifts in understanding a new interpretivist approach to evaluation was developed with the emphasis focused on establishing external validity and contextual meaningfulness (see Cronbach *et al.* 1980). The particular method of a qualitative evaluation is determined by a much broader interpretation of the purpose of the social program than in the case of the scientific approach. The qualitative evaluation's emphasis on contextualised meaning requires a rich case study approach to assessment that allows "insight into an issue or refinement of theory" (Stake 1998:88). Such an approach shifts the emphasis on evaluation from valuing to learning.

The third epistemological root described by Table 1 is distinctive for its rejection of the established tie between epistemology and practice. Pragmatism advocates *methodological appropriateness* over the *methodological orthodoxy* dictated by a particular epistemology (Patton 1988). The measure of quality for such an evaluation is in the selection of the appropriate method for the purpose of the inquiry. The process of selection and design establishes the strongest tie between evaluation method and the aim of the social program. In the selection of appropriate methods, the pragmatic approach responds to the changing demands of the inquiry and consequently is flexible and adaptive, applying both quantitative and qualitative methods where suitable.

Normative evaluation sets itself apart from the previous three themes in that the design stimulus stems from its foundations in an openly activist ideology. Goals of greater social and environmental justice, democracy and equity define the method, rather than the purpose, of the social program. Sometimes known as constructivist evaluation (Guba & Lincoln 1989), the evaluation design embraces participatory approaches in keeping with its goals of emancipation and empowerment. The evaluation goes beyond the assessment of a particular program to address the consequences of the evaluation and in doing so the evaluator adopts an active role seeking to stimulate change within the policy process. The ideological positioning of the normative evaluator dictates a degree of prescription to the evaluation method. This directional element to the evaluation reduces the interpretivist value of the various qualitative methods it applies. In doing so it shifts the emphasis from the generation of contextualised meaning towards a focus on a particular ideological goal.

These four themes of evaluation provide a useful framework with which to organise the multiple approaches to participation evaluation. The challenge in applying this framework is in identifying the purpose of the evaluation. An initial indication is provided by the particular methodological approach adopted by the assessment. However, a growing appreciation of the value of a multi-method approach blurs the boundaries between the four philosophical frameworks. In order to organise different evaluations under these four headings it is necessary to recognise the relationship between the purpose of the program or participatory event and the goals of the evaluation approach. This requires a holistic view of the evaluation that captures the design reasoning, methods, results and intended influence of the particular approach.

The discussion set out below provides this holistic review of the evaluation practices applied to participatory processes. To begin with, it provides an overview of the principles of evaluation and in particular highlights the absence of any consensus from within the participation literature.

4.4.2 Principles of evaluation

As might be expected given the diffuse nature of the literature, there is no single accepted set of principles for evaluation. Principles are determined by the evaluation's epistemological basis interwoven with pragmatic and contextual considerations. The section below provides a broad review of these principles. I omit those referring specifically to participatory evaluation as these are discussed at a later stage. Many of the following principles are grounded in a normative understanding of the role of evaluation. In contrast to these, the defining steps of traditional program evaluation provide an objective set of rules. William R. Shadish (1998:15) describes these as the Four Steps in the Logic of Evaluation. They are:

- Select criteria of merit, i.e. those things the evaluated must do to be judged 'good'.
- Set standards of performance based on those criteria; these can be comparative or absolute levels that must be exceeded to warrant the distinction 'good'.
- Gather data pertaining to the evaluand's performance under the criteria relative to the standards.
- Integrate the results into a final value judgement.

An early review of evaluation frameworks for public participation by Sewell and Phillips (1979) identifies three 'major needs' which should be addressed by evaluation. These three needs reflect both a positivist approach to assessment alongside an appreciation of the inherent plurality of values within a participatory process. The first 'need' is for evaluation to be carried out by an 'independent observer'.

> "It is evident that....perceptions of the various participants in the decision making process vary considerably and that these lead inevitably to biases in the formulation and interpretation of the evaluations." (Sewell and Philips 1979:356).

The second requirement for evaluation is that it is embedded within the entire process of participation rather than being 'regarded as a final step'. Here, evaluation is seen as a formative tool that can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the process of participation.

Finally evaluation should recognise the multiple interests involved within a participatory process. The independent evaluation should attempt to recognise the goals of the main participant groups rather than simply adopting the "standpoint of the sponsoring agency" (Sewell and Philips 1979:357).

Syme and Sadler (1994) describe four principles of evaluation that represent a clear shift away from the traditional top down evaluation characteristic of positivist assessments. Instead they engage with the notion of a collaborative evaluation approach that aims to empower the participants. They set out an openly ideological approach to evaluation, in keeping with their understanding of evaluation "as a tool for improving public involvement processes" (Syme and Sadler 1994:532). In doing so they blur the boundaries between the participatory process and evaluation while also attempting to retain the importance of evaluator independence. The first two principles are concerned with the participatory process and are seen as necessary prerequisites for an evaluation concerned with the equity of the participatory process. The first requires that "the objectives of the public involvement program must be agreed on between the affected public and the planner" (Syme and Sadler 1994: 532). The second recognises the importance of establishing shared criteria to show that "objectives have been met" (Syme and Sadler 1994: 533). The third principle identifies evaluation as an ongoing process that can assist in "modifying the public involvement and planning process as it proceeds" (Syme and Sadler 1994: 533). In keeping with this is the need to identify an evaluator from the moment the objectives are set and to allocate sufficient resources at the beginning of the participatory process. Finally the evaluation should be developed in partnership with the evaluator who acts as a consultant to the participants. This role is akin to that envisioned by Guba and Lincoln, who suggest that evaluators should be "subjective partners with stakeholders in the literal creation of evaluation data" (Guba and Lincoln 1989:110).

Although the evaluator's consultant role identified by Syme and Sadler is sympathetic to the nature of the participatory process, it presents a challenge to the traditional role of the evaluator. The evaluator must rely on his/her own expert judgement in order to walk a fine line between imposing an evaluation and ensuring the assessment retains credibility in the eyes of the relevant audience. This consultant role places the evaluator in a new space where there are no procedural guidelines to ensure best practice. Such an approach would seem to require a second, more independent, evaluator to oversee the evaluation and ensure the active consultant retains a balanced perspective within the contested space in which they operate.

Much of the variation in principles found within evaluation practice can be linked to two divergent approaches to evaluation. The first, bolstered by an already extensive literature within the development field (see Estrella & Gaventa 1998), advocates a participatory approach to evaluation. The second retains a traditional grounding within a positivist approach, stating "we must conduct them [evaluations] scientifically without concern for how the results will be used" or "who the evaluation is for" (Todd 2001:98). The positioning of an evaluation somewhere between these two approaches determines much about that evaluation's aims and the way it will be conducted. The following section provides a review of the arguments for and against participatory evaluation.

4.4.3 Participatory evaluation

The practice of participatory evaluation developed within the policy-making programmes of NGOs and development agencies during the early 1980s (Howes 1992). Despite a twenty year history there is "no single coherent conceptual definition of participatory monitoring and evaluation; rather there is a wide scope for interpretation" (Estrella & Gaventa 1998:4). Given this opportunity for interpretation it is not surprising that there is some confusion as to the role of participatory evaluation. Oakley refers to this when he says:

> "The evaluation of participation in development projects is not necessarily the same as 'participatory evaluation'. Much literature reduces the debate on how to evaluate by describing techniques of participatory evaluation." (Oakley 1991:240).

This is demonstrated by the InterAct report (2001:3) on evaluation, which identifies "two elements to any framework for evaluation of participation". The first is the participatory process (i.e. what is evaluated), and the second is the participatory evaluation process (i.e. how to evaluate). Although InterAct recognises a role for independent assessment, it provides little indication as to how the two approaches can be married together.

The concept of participatory evaluation developed in response to established criticisms of conventional assessment (see for instance Estrella and Gaventa 1998, Feuerstein 1986, and Sommer 2000). These arguments against top-down evaluation highlight its failure to acknowledge the influence of context, its self-limiting nature in failing to engage with the knowledges of the process participants and its failure to generate a common ownership over the evaluation's results. Participatory evaluation aims to address these shortcomings through locally relevant processes that are responsive to people's needs. Many of the benefits linked to a participatory evaluation acknowledge its normative foundation of empowerment (Narayan-Parker 1993), so much so that Fetterman *et al.* (1996) coined the phrase 'empowerment evaluation' in order to describe evaluation strategies that emphasise participatory approaches. Mirroring the arguments surrounding participatory decision-making, the evaluation literature predicts substantive benefits from participatory evaluation, such as improved efficiency, greater sustainability of project outputs improved levels of understanding and social capacity (Estrella & Gaventa 1998).

Just as different participatory decision-making processes can be located along dimensions of power, so too can participatory evaluation exercises. The point at which the evaluation registers on this scale will define the role of the evaluator and the impact of the evaluation (Estrella and Gaventa 1998). Although there is considerable variation in methods, participatory evaluation marks a coherent shift away from the expert based scientific approach by applying simple transparent methods that are contextually sensitive and provide opportunities for self-assessment (Narayan-Parker 1993).
Evaluation of participatory decision-making demands a minimum level of participation from those individuals involved in the process. Despite this prerequisite for collective involvement, participatory evaluation of participatory decision-making has rarely extended beyond a collaborative level of assessment. In many cases this simply means

the evaluation has sought to adopt criteria of success or effectiveness identified by the participants. Webler *et al.* (2001) employed Q methodology to identify how participants in a planning process in New England and New York described five different discourses of good process. However, they did not go on to apply these measures to evaluate the planning process. Carnes *et al.* (1998:38) asked stakeholders to "help identify attributes of successful public participation in environmental management activities and how to elicit their ideas and suggestions regarding how these attributes might be measured". However, it would appear that the stakeholders' input only extended as far as rating "16 different attributes of success" (Carnes *et al.* 1998:39) identified by an earlier literature review.

The limited commitment to 'real' participatory evaluation is an indication of the various challenges to which this approach gives rise. These challenges are effectively captured by the circular reasoning inherent in the use of participatory techniques to evaluate participatory techniques. The evaluation of like with like effectively undermines the claims of greater validity, integration and empowerment made within the supporting literature for participatory evaluation (see for instance Brandon 1998, Mark and Shortland 1985). This powerful argument appears to be absent from the literature critiquing this approach; rather a variety of points have been raised through both empirical work and literature reviews. Gregory (2000) offers a critique of Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation, an essentially participatory approach to evaluation. In this review, Gregory (2000:185) identifies the challenges of managing power relations that are inherent in the political process of "an evaluation which seeks to promote evaluation". Although Guba and Lincoln address this, their suggestions for managing such problems as attempts by clients to exclude certain parties on the basis of possessing insufficient knowledge, place considerable responsibility in the hands of the evaluator. This reliance demands significant skills on the part of the evaluator. Not only does it retain their position of expertise and control that the participatory approach is designed to remove but it is also presents a high risk strategy given the opportunity for manipulation if they fail. In addition to the political trappings of participatory evaluation, the approach "does not...discuss in necessary detail the range of values, motivations, prejudices, etc which will emerge and need to be effectively managed in the participatory environment" (Gregory 2000:185).

Laughlin and Broadbent (1996) suggest that to assume the provision of opportunities for discourse will lead to participants resolving disagreements is naïve and fails to appreciate the strength of potential conflicts. The impact of diverging values and expectations between participants was identified by Mercier (1997) in a study of the participatory evaluation of a health program for the homeless.

> "Even though all [participants] shared a common cause...-the welfare of the homeless - stakeholders presented many differences that often translated into inequalities. The most glaring imbalance was in the various agencies' different organisational cultures, which led them to experience the evaluation very differently." (Mercier 1997:471).

In this example, the competing understandings of the purpose of the participatory evaluation and the participants' differing expectations, ensured that many of the predicted benefits, such as ownership and commitment, failed to materialise. For instance, "no move was made to implement any of the recommendations" suggested by the evaluation report (Mercier 1997:470).

The diversity of values and knowledges embraced by participatory evaluation challenges the evaluation to deliver on its claims of transformative benefits. Mathie & Greene (1997:280) caution "that too much diversity may stall or subvert the transformative aims of participatory evaluation because time and resources are rarely available to work through and resolve the complex range of voices and perspectives". This, in turn, challenges the evaluator to identify a level of diversity which will ensure the evaluation delivers the transformative benefits expected from a democratising and participatory approach. However, with each such evaluation being contextually defined there can be few guidelines as to what would be an appropriate level of diversity.

The contextual richness inherent in a participatory evaluation is both a strength and a weakness. While it ensures rich experiential understanding it effectively limits the comparative power of the evaluation. The relative youth of public participation and the diversity of practices has necessitated an approach to evaluation that tests the normative and substantive arguments and allows for the identification of best practice. This is not a goal that participatory evaluation can effectively contribute towards. With time, the broad purpose of evaluation will develop in parallel to the changing acceptance and

understanding regarding participatory decision-making. As this happens the emphasis will shift towards individual project evaluations more suited to participatory evaluation.

4.4.4 Strategies of evaluation

A review of the evaluation literature identifies two broad evaluation strategies within which there can be multiple evaluation methods. The first of these two strategies strives to identify the relationship between participatory process and product. The second seeks to compare different participatory processes in order to establish a rule of fitness for purpose. Which of these two strategies is adopted depends on the questions posed by the evaluation audience. Other than the level of commitment to participatory evaluation (predefined by the strength of the normative purpose of the evaluation) the choice of method is left to the evaluator. The majority of evaluations found in the literature currently fall within a comparative evaluation strategy. This does not always mean that they actively compare between different processes but rather that the methods and criteria applied allow that comparison to occur. The first of these two strategies of evaluation is referred to as internal evaluation (Clark *et al.* 2000).

I. Internal evaluation

The emphasis of internal evaluation is on establishing the ability of the participatory process to meet its objectives in terms of inputs and outcomes; this includes those transformative products predicted from the process. The focus on an individual process provides the opportunity to determine the influence of context. Evaluation tends to be project specific and driven by the particular objectives of a participatory practice. As a result, this approach is traditionally seen as a means of in-house monitoring and management. The demand in such cases is to provide substantive measures of success. Coenen *et al.* (1998) and Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998), highlight the requirement for substantive measures of change particularly as the process-derived benefits are intangible and dispersed. This is necessary otherwise "the whole process will be castigated as nothing more than a talking shop" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998:1983).

Internal evaluations of participatory decision-making processes have been fewer in number in contrast to more comparative approaches. One reason for this can be found in the relationship between audience and evaluation strategy. The most immediate audience for an internal evaluation are funders and project managers and these groups might regard the evaluation as an unnecessary expense. This is especially true given the costs associated with running a participatory event. In addition to this, the traditional funding requirement for accountability is removed when the subject of such an assessment is commonly regarded as a 'good thing', as is the case with participatory decision-making. In many cases the *ad hoc* evaluation that commonly occurs at the end of a participatory event is seen as sufficient.

The study by Blatner *et al.* (2001) on the effectiveness of collaborative learning comes close to an internal evaluation strategy. The study's emphasis is on the evaluation of a particular case study rather than on comparisons with other approaches. In this case, the evaluation considered the inputs into a process and in particular, the participants' views prior to their involvement in workshops. Immediately after the workshops the participants were provided with a questionnaire designed to determine any change in their views and the effectiveness of the main stages of the participatory process. Methodologically the evaluation applied a positivist 'quasi-experimental case study approach'. The results are presented in typical questionnaire statistics describing means and standard deviations; little is made of the influence of context on the process.

II. Comparative evaluation

The great majority of participation evaluations adopt a comparative strategy (Blahna & Yonts-Shepard 1989, Chess & Purcell 1999, Halvorsen 2001, Petts and Leach 2000, Rowe & Frewer 2000, Santos & Chess 2003). Although criteria based on the concepts of fairness and competence in process have become established within comparative evaluation practices (Barnes 1999, Petts 2001, Renn *et al.* 1995,) there remains great variety amongst comparative evaluation methods. The evaluation may be outcome based or focused on the process; it may adopt procedural normative criteria or apply social interest goals. In some cases the evaluation will apply a suite of criteria to a number of participatory practices and in others, simply use generic criteria to evaluate a single process. The following discussion reviews this variation in comparative

evaluation practice and highlights the assumptions and contradictions inherent in many of the methods.

Comparative process evaluation

In a multi-method field of research, comparative process evaluation is perhaps the most frequently applied evaluation strategy, this is despite the fact the method is unusual within wider evaluation practices. It does not fit neatly into the typology of evaluation described by program evaluation, being neither formative nor summative in design. The goal of process evaluation is perhaps closest to that of implementation studies. Implementation studies are described as an interpretation of a summative assessment by the program evaluation literature. Herman *et al.* (1987) offer the following explanation of implementation studies:

> "sponsors and other users may be willing to judge or make decisions about the program on the basis of whether or not they think the activities occurring are valuable in themselves or probably will be effective in achieving other goals. This is particularly true when the program is designed to reflect a philosophy or theory of how particular kinds of organisations should be run in order to achieve long-term goals that cannot be immediately measured." (Herman *et al.* 1987:17).

The monitoring element to process evaluation (sometimes referred to as program monitoring or monitoring evaluation, see Rossi *et al.*1999*)* shifts the emphasis away from valuing and judging and onto description and prediction. In altering the focus, it offers a means to bypass many of the challenges inherent in a traditional assessment of participatory effectiveness. However, in sidestepping the challenges of context and multiple interpretations of success the approach effectively embraces a set of assumptions that, given the current inexperience of participatory decision-making have been inadequately tested. The following discussion presents the arguments for comparative process evaluation and provides examples of common criteria.

In developing the now widely applied meta-criteria of fairness and competence, Thomas Webler (1995) argued for a process-focused normative model of evaluation that allowed for comparison between cases. It would appear that Webler settled on this process focus after identifying the problems posed by outcome evaluation, rather than because of the particular strengths of procedural evaluation. In particular, "the difficulty

of...knowing with certainty the generalised will" of the participants, challenges any assessment based on a single outcome (Webler 1995:37). Not having any prior understanding of the collective will prevents the evaluation from referring the outcome to a baseline level necessary for any measure of effectiveness. Webler (1995:36) goes on to argue that subjective evaluation based on individual participants' assessments must confront the problem of identifying "whose preferred outcome – should we use to base an evaluation?" Preferred outcomes will vary from participant to participant, essentially preventing the aggregation of individual preferences. Webler's final argument for a process-based evaluation recognises the limited value of comparing outcomes between cases of different context; "what basis is there for comparing satisfaction of models unless they are used in precisely the same context?" (Webler 1995:38)

Webler argues that an evaluation based on a normative model of participation allows for systematic comparison between different cases and the means to make a "judgement about how well a certain technique for participation works" (Webler 1995:38). To this end Webler developed the meta-criteria of fairness and competence. These criteria address the micro-level interaction amongst individuals that defines the participatory process. The criteria take their lead from the normative ideal of the Habermasian speech situation. In doing so the metacriteria of fairness in process identifies four needs of participation. These are:

- attend (be a participant);
- initiate discourse;
- discuss (challenge and defend claims); and
- decide (influence the collective consensus).

All participants must be free to act in any of these four ways at any stage of the participatory process in order for it to be considered fair.

Competence of process "refers to the construction of the best possible understandings and agreements given what is reasonably knowable to the participants" (Webler 1995:65). Webler identifies two needs for a competent process. The first is that there should be sufficient access to information and its meaning to ensure an equality of knowledge. The second requires the "best procedures for resolving disputes about

knowledge and interpretations and for checking the authenticity and sincerity of claims" (Petts 2001:209). These criteria of fairness and competence have been consistently applied within evaluation research, perhaps most notably in a review of eight different participatory processes edited by Renn *et al.* (1995).

Although Webler's framework is "regarded as the most thoughtful and comprehensive consideration of the question of evaluation" (Rowe & Frewer 2000:12) the diffuse and multi-faceted nature of the evaluation literature ensures that there are numerous other process criteria. Blahna & Yonts-Sheppard (1989) offered some of the first process criteria in their evaluation of public involvement in forest planning in the US. The five criteria they applied were accepted 'rules of thumb' that the literature had established over time. The criteria asked the following questions of the participatory process:

- Was the input representative of all interested citizens?
- What was the level of commitment to the participatory approach from within the policy process?
- Was the participation conducted early in the planning process?
- Did the participatory process allow for face-to-face discussions?
- Did the process show how the input was used in the planning process?

Rowe and Frewer (2000) developed the metacriteria of acceptance and effectiveness of a participatory process and in many ways these can be seen to be analogous to Webler's fairness and competence measures. Fiorino (1990) suggests four criteria rooted in an understanding of participatory democracy. Although Webler argues that grounding an evaluation in the macro-level assessment described by democratic theories misses much of the functioning of a participatory process, the criteria presented by Fiorino have strong similarities with those found under the headings of fairness and competence:

- The process 'should allow for direct participation of amateurs in decisions.'
- The process must be assessed by the extent to which it 'enables citizens to share in collective decision-making.'
- The process should show a commitment to face-to-face discussion.
- The process should allow for equality in participation amongst all those involved.

The common adoption of process-focused criteria provides little indication of the assumptions and limitations inherent in such an approach. In fact, a process-based

evaluation is essentially a descriptive assessment of a participatory practice that falls well short of Webler's intended goal of identifying "how well a certain technique for participation works" (Webler 1995:38). Rossi *et al.* (1999:69-70) confirm this criticism when they state that "process evaluation does not address the question of whether a program produces the intended outcomes and benefits for its recipients".

Process evaluations are undermined by a number of assumptions. The first of these is that good processes leads to good outcomes. But as Beierle (1998:13) points out, "the relationship between procedural criteria (balanced membership, face-to-face discussions, etc) and the goals of interest are poorly supported by the literature". In fact, an evaluation by Chess and Purcell (1999) concluded that the "form of participation does not determine process or outcome success", meaning that a description of process is a poor indicator of success.

A process evaluation imposes an ideological standpoint that offers little opportunity to identify what participants' value about their involvement in a participatory process. A recent study by Santos and Chess (2003) evaluated citizen advisory boards against both Habermasian criteria of fairness and participant derived criteria. The comparative evaluation highlighted the failing of process evaluation to address the tangible and substantive outcomes which the user-based criteria showed as being of importance to participants.

By adopting a focus on process, the evaluation in effect contradicts itself. The process criterion of inclusion is in recognition of the multiple interests, knowledges and values with which a participatory process must engage in order to achieve a consensual decision. However, a focus on process rather than participants effectively dismisses this variation and assumes that all individuals must experience the process equally. Acknowledging that a process must strive to be inclusionary and then ignoring that variation, undermines any statements of effectiveness resulting from such an evaluation.

Rather than providing evidence of participatory impacts that would help identify best practice, a procedural approach can only make predictions based on inadequately tested normative theory. This approach to evaluation fails to capture the multiple contextual features affecting a participatory process. Organisational context, social history, role of

particular individuals and geographical contexts have all variously been shown to impact upon the effectiveness of participatory process (Jones *et al.* 2001). The assumptions regarding the influence of context serve to remove the comparative element from process evaluation. A process may be referred to an ideal "procedural normative model of public participation"(Webler 1995: 38) but there is little value in then making comparisons between different participatory processes because of the influence of multiple unknown variables.

Comparative outcome evaluation

Comparative outcome evaluation describes a broad evaluation strategy encompassing a range of different methods. Although each evaluation is concerned with the results of the participatory process, the emphasis of the evaluation can vary between outputs, outcomes or third order effects (Innes & Booher 1999). Clark *et al.* (2001:19) describe outputs as "the direct results of the actions" of the process and as being dependent on the process objectives. Examples include the development of a management plan, greater understanding amongst participants or strengthened levels of trust between organisations. Outcomes go beyond the immediate results described by outputs and describe the lasting changes resulting from the participatory process, which may be substantive or intangible. However, the relationship between outputs and outcomes is such that the link from one to the other is dependent on the context in which the process operates. For instance, outputs of trust and commitment amongst the participants need to be transferred to colleagues and organisations if they are to become effective outcomes. This transfer is challenged when faced with multi-departmental organisations, weak organisational commitment, or fragmented organisational structures that foster poor communication. These complications mean that an evaluation must look beyond immediate results in order to establish a true measure of effectiveness. Innes and Booher (1999) describe a set of third order effects that are further removed from the actual participatory process. With each step away from the process, the influence of context is enhanced and the link to participation weakened. For instance, to what extent is it possible to tie new institutions, new norms and discourses to the participatory process (Innes & Booher 1999)? The weak causal links between higher order products and the participation ensure that the absence of any such products is a poor indicator of process failure.

A review of the evaluation literature fails to identify a consensus of approach regarding outcome evaluation. The criteria may be based on the interests of certain participants, reflect the generic objectives of participation or be tied to the particular goals of the process. For example, interest–based evaluation adopts the perspective of a particular group or individual within the process. This has traditionally meant evaluating from the position of the sponsoring agency and has sought to identify the extent to which participation secured "public acceptance of planning decisions" (Sewell & Phillips 1979:342). This selective approach to evaluation requires the evaluator to make a judgement as to which parties' demands have most legitimacy. Such a basis for evaluation is contrary to participation's goal of equality and provides a poor means of assessing the true effectiveness of participation.

Rosener (1978) provides an original example of goal-focused evaluation. In her study of the Californian transport planning process (Caltrans), she applied established program evaluation methods. This approach emphasises the need to link criteria to program objectives. Each of Rosener's criteria was designed to match the particular criteria of the program, with the intention of providing the means to conclude that "if the participation activities met the criteria, the objectives would be achieved" (Rosener 1978:461). Examples of the criteria applied by Rosener include "evidence that there was interaction between Caltrans staff and participants, and evidence that citizen input was used in policy making" (Rosener 1978:461). In basing the evaluation on the stated objectives this approach strived for the validity demanded by policy-makers. However, taken on its own this approach has significant weaknesses. The goal orientation predefines measures of success for a program that is deliberately organic and spontaneous in its design. Rather than solely focusing on goal achievement Scriven (1967) argues for a more value orientated approach that recognises the value of actual impacts in addition to intended effects. This approach acknowledges Innes and Booher's (1999) belief that participation may still be effective even when it does not achieve what it set out to do.

Neither of the two approaches set out here provide powerful comparative models of evaluation. In both cases, the focus on specifics, be it particular perspectives, or program goals, limits the opportunity to identify best practice across the range of possibilities. Beierle (1998) addresses this shortcoming in his social goal evaluation

framework. Beierle identifies six 'social' goals on which participatory programs might be expected to deliver by posing the question: what is the problem (or problems) public participation programs are meant to predict? These goals represent a "more expansive interpretation of outcomes" that capture those expected benefits of participation that "transcend the immediate interests of parties involved" (Beierle 1998:5).

4.4.5 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the considerable variation in the practice and purpose of different evaluation strategies. It is apparent that the challenge of evaluating participatory processes requires an innovative approach that recognises the particular strengths of the different possible strategies and seeks to bring these together in a suitable composite approach. The following chapter builds on the learning from Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in order to develop such a strategy.

Chapter 5

An evaluation strategy for Stakeholder Dialogue

"Developing an evaluation is an exercise of the dramatic imagination."

(Cronbach 1982:239)

Introduction

The following chapter describes and justifies an evaluation strategy designed to address the questions and challenges posed within this thesis. In presenting the approach to evaluation, Chapter 5 provides the concluding part to the four-step process represented by Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. This final summative chapter applies the principles, practice and understanding of Stakeholder Dialogue detailed in Chapter 3 along with the theoretical basis for assessment from Chapter 2, to the lessons on evaluation practice gleaned from Chapter 4. In doing so it identifies a multi-method pragmatic evaluation focused on the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Chapter 5 is distinct from the previous two chapters in that its purpose of synthesis positions it in an active decision-making space that requires it to select and reject possible methods. These decisions are informed by the goal of evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue, and while many of them are instrumental, the absence of rules or precedents combined with the political nature of evaluation ensures that many represent personal and normative responses to the challenge of assessment. In this way Chapter 5 is a personal statement of best practice informed by the earlier reviews.

The evaluation strategy described below does not set out a generic statement of assessment for participatory decision-making; instead the approach reflects both the specific focus on Stakeholder Dialogue and the boundaries defined by the CASE PhD research process. In effect, the design and implementation of the evaluation strategy undergo a two-stage process of refinement. Initially, evaluation best practice is held up to the principles and implementation of Stakeholder Dialogue. This acts as a quality

control step and ensures the evaluation is focused and sympathetic to the goals of Stakeholder Dialogue. The result of this initial process of design must then be considered in the light of the research context, defined both by the three-year PhD process and by the role of the CASE funder. Together these two defining features of the research environment have been influential in determining the eventual evaluation strategy. For instance, The Environment Council presented an often-contradictory agenda. Although there was clear support for the evaluation study from within the organisation there was very limited commitment to the idea of assessment from amongst the team of independent facilitators. This had important implications for the evaluation method, particularly in terms of the number of suitable case studies and the level of participation in the design process. In addition to this, The Environment Council's understanding that this study was an opportunity for promotion as much as learning framed the initial research process.

The following sections provide the reasoning and context for the evaluation strategy set out in the final section of this chapter. The first section reviews the evaluation questions that provide the defining design stimulus for the evaluation method. This is followed by a justification for adopting a pragmatic epistemology and a discussion on the emphasis this places on fitting methods to purpose. The third section of the chapter applies the points of learning set out in Chapter 3 to the various methodologies described in Chapter 4; in doing so I identify the broad themes that define this evaluation strategy. This approach acknowledges the multi-faceted requirement of participation evaluation and allows the evaluation to be seen in its constituent parts.

5.1 Focusing the evaluation

The first step in designing an evaluation involves establishing the focus of assessment (Stecher & Davis 1987). This can be done in a number of different ways but ultimately involves describing the questions the evaluation should attempt to answer. The process by which these questions are identified is potentially a complex task.

> "It involves negotiations between people who do not always share the same beliefs and attitudes, who do not possess the same information about the topics they are discussing and who do not place equal value on the same potential outcomes. Moreover, it is a human interaction, and like all human

> interactions, it is full of subtleties and subject to infinite variation." (Stecher & Davis 1987:11).

Although the process of focusing this evaluation was perhaps not quite as daunting as Stecher and Davis suggest, it involved many of the challenges they identify. Stecher and Davis describe three elements to the focusing process: existing beliefs and expectations, gathering information and formulating an evaluation plan. The first two of these capture many of the early dilemmas I faced in developing the evaluation strategy.

5.1.1 Existing beliefs and expectations

In addition to my own initial concept of evaluation there were a range of competing understandings from within The Environment Council, as well as the dominant concepts found within the participation literature. The various understandings within The Environment Council defined many of the early attempts to focus the evaluation. It was apparent from the outset that the Dialogue Team[18] had only a very limited awareness of the research project; it was equally clear that the impetus for this study had come from within The Environment Council rather than at the request of the facilitators. My first attempt at communication with the facilitators uncovered a range of understandings and levels of support for the idea of evaluation[19]. Some facilitators openly dismissed the goal of evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue, describing it as an impossibility given the great variation in practice. Their lack of ownership regarding this project was also evident at the first facilitators' meeting I attended. After being invited by the Dialogue Team Manager who was convening the meeting I was then asked to leave by the facilitators. At the meeting it became apparent that one of the key facilitators who had been instrumental in developing Stakeholder Dialogue was strongly opposed to the research. One facilitator who was receptive to the idea did ensure the evaluation questions benefited from the input of a practitioner. However, for the most part, the lack of support from within the facilitation team effectively limited the level of practitioner participation in the process of focusing the evaluation.

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[18] The Dialogue Team is the department within The Environment Council with responsibility for coordinating and managing Stakeholder Dialogue projects. They are the first point of contact for inquiries regarding Stakeholder Dialogue and provide the link to the independent facilitators.

[19] Chapter 6 p147 provides a detailed description of this variable support.

The Environment Council, and in particular the Dialogue Team, had various expectations and understandings as to how the evaluation should be focused. Although they clearly regarded this as an opportunity to learn and improve the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue it also became clear that they saw the research as a means of promoting Stakeholder Dialogue. These two competing goals emphasise quite different, and sometimes contradictory, approaches to evaluation. In order to contribute to learning the evaluation must seek to identify the relationship between process and products, both good and bad. Promotion of Stakeholder Dialogue on the other hand emphasises the description of success rather than any explanation for failure. The intended goal of promotion had a distorting influence on the focus suggested by The Environment Council and one I had to be actively aware of when setting the evaluation questions.

5.1.2 Gathering information

In order to ensure the evaluation is valid the evaluation strategy must be built on a comprehensive understanding of the subject for assessment. In the case of Stakeholder Dialogue this means establishing the principles that ground the practice, identifying the origins and development of the process, reviewing the variation in interpretation that leads to differing practices, and understanding the selection process that The Environment Council uses when accepting projects. The necessary learning and information required to sympathetically focus the evaluation was challenged on a number of counts. The principal obstacle lay in the lack of support for the project amongst the facilitators. This problem was exaggerated by the organisational structure of The Environment Council, which operates to isolate the facilitators from the heart of the organisation, and effectively limits communication. These two factors combined to reduce my access to the knowledge and expertise found amongst those who practise Stakeholder Dialogue. I actively addressed this obstacle by organising meetings with those facilitators who were supportive of the research and by participating in the training courses run by facilitators[20].

[20] During the research process I participated in three training courses run by The Environment Council and had regular meetings with one facilitator and occasional discussions with four others. The training courses covered Stakeholder Dialogue principles, design and techniques.

In addition to the challenges involved in communicating with the sources of information a second set of obstacles presented itself in respect of the information itself. Chapter 3 showed that there is only limited consensus amongst the facilitators and staff of The Environment Council as to what the grounding principles of Stakeholder Dialogue are. There is also an apparent confusion regarding the difference between descriptions of practice and principles. This diffuse and fragmented understanding regarding the basis of Stakeholder Dialogue combines with the interpretative role of the independent facilitator to ensure considerable variation in practice. In order to clarify the information on Stakeholder Dialogue I held meetings with the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive of The Environment Council as well as with the Dialogue Team. From these meetings I went on to participate in a meeting of the independent facilitators (16th May 2001) at which I facilitated a discussion on the common features of Stakeholder Dialogue.

The challenges of information gathering ensured an iterative process which ran parallel to the development of the evaluation strategy. Over the course of the research these obstacles to information were overcome through repeated contact with facilitators at regular meetings held by The Environment Council, attending training courses and observing Stakeholder Dialogue in practice.

5.1.3 Evaluation questions

Carefully constructed evaluation questions are necessary if the evaluation strategy is to provide relevant information. These questions are a product of the multiple beliefs and expectations regarding the role of evaluation together with the available information on the subject of assessment. Of course, if there are multiple audiences the evaluation may need to address various different questions. The process of identifying these questions can vary from case to case depending on the extent to which they are developed through negotiation with the evaluation audience. The level of funder involvement in setting evaluation questions (often the principal audience) is determined by a number of factors. Foremost amongst these is the funder's commitment to the assessment. A lack of commitment may mean a reluctance to attach resources to a process often regarded as being the responsibility of the evaluator. Equally important is the extent to which the

evaluation must be seen as independent. Extensive involvement of the funder can effectively remove the independent element from the evaluation and reduce its validity in the eyes of other interested parties. Where there are multiple parties and contrasting questions the evaluator can either actively mediate between groups in order to reach agreement regarding focus or, alternatively, develop the questions independently. The role the evaluator adopts will depend on his or her own beliefs and expectations, the positions of the various audiences and the available resources.

In establishing the focus of this evaluation I maintained a level of independence from The Environment Council while at the same time ensuring there was sufficient participation for the evaluation to be relevant, accurate and accepted. The emphasis towards independence in focusing the evaluation was a design decision in response to a number of factors. Firstly, I believed a certain level of independence was necessary to ensure that the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue was effectively challenged by the evaluation. Secondly, independence was vital if the evaluation was to be sufficiently credible and valid to make it of interest to a wider audience. In addition to these personal decisions the limited commitment of the facilitators effectively ensured that focusing the evaluation was largely an independent process. Alongside this was the need for the evaluation to accommodate the questions of two distinct audiences, the practitioner and the academic. In order to provide answers for both audiences I ensured the process of focusing the evaluation retained the necessary level of independent control. Had this not been the case, unequal levels of participation from each audience in the process of focusing the study would have meant some questions would probably go unanswered.

Notwithstanding the fact that the primary focus for the evaluation was defined by myself, it arose out of an iterative process involving the participation of a number of interested individuals. I held meetings with members of The Environment Council, facilitators, academics and interested parties such as the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. These meetings were used to ensure the evaluation recognised the needs of its multiple audiences. An initial description of evaluation questions was presented to a mid-term review workshop that included the Chief Executive of The Environment Council, one of the original facilitators involved in developing Stakeholder Dialogue, and eight other interested individuals.

The opening focus for the evaluation is provided by the question posed in the PhD title, which requires the evaluation to establish the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue in environmental decision-making. This question frames the evaluation strategy and places the emphasis on determining the extent to which Stakeholder Dialogue delivers the intended results. The questions set out below address the various components involved in establishing a measure of effectiveness. In addition to this, the questions require the evaluation strategy to go beyond establishing a measure of effectiveness and ask why Stakeholder Dialogue produces the results it does. In doing so, the evaluation moves beyond the standard goal of assessment to embrace the challenge of providing explanations and learning.

This evaluation is focused by the seven questions set out below. For each question I provide a short discussion on why that particular question has been chosen and how it helps to determine the evaluation strategy.

Q1. What are the outputs and outcomes from a Stakeholder Dialogue process?

This is intentionally an open question designed to reflect the organic nature of participatory decision-making and to ensure that all valued products are considered by the evaluation. In this way the evaluation reflects Scriven's (1967) argument that a program should be assessed on the basis of its actual effects rather than simply on its achievement of intended effects. This evaluation recognises that participatory decision-making runs counter to the idea of fixed goals. Although there is a predefined purpose, the opportunity for free deliberation amongst a range of interests creates a space in which new ideas and initiatives are intended to flourish. By focusing on stated objectives alone an evaluation misses the creative claim attached to Stakeholder Dialogue and participatory decision-making. This question ensures the evaluation acknowledges that "consensus building may be effective even when it does not accomplish what its participants or sponsors originally intended" (Innes & Booher 1999:413). An evaluation focused solely on stated objectives runs the risk of providing an incomplete assessment of effectiveness. Equally importantly the question does not focus the evaluation on any one participant group; there is a clear recognition that Stakeholder Dialogue is founded on a principle of equality amongst participants. In light of this the evaluation would fall short of providing a rigorous assessment if it limited its focus to the outputs and outcomes experienced by a minority of participants.

This open goal-free question rejects the reductionist paradigm of the experimental evaluation strategy. In doing so it moves the evaluation away from quantitative experimental design to embrace the pluralism inherent in an interpretative approach. The focus on establishing a comprehensive measure of effectiveness requires the evaluation strategy to provide equal opportunity for individuals to describe how the process of participation matched their needs.

Q2 How effective is the process of Stakeholder Dialogue in meeting its stated objectives?

Every application of Stakeholder Dialogue has a particular purpose and any assessment of effectiveness must establish the extent to which Stakeholder Dialogue delivers on these stated objectives. Although participatory decision-making may generate unpredicted benefits, for many participants it must also be seen to achieve its purpose. In the majority of cases, funding commitments are made on the basis of stated purpose and objectives.

Although effectiveness is commonly understood to involve "measuring outputs against targets set" (Warburton 1998:48) it remains a challenging concept to operationalise. Some indication of this is provided by the more developed definition offered by Altschuld and Zheng (1995:200),:

> "effectiveness is a comprehensive construct that requires sophisticated measurement efforts to evaluate. As such it is a higher level abstraction developed from lower level constructs, including productivity, efficiency, quality, job satisfaction, morale, control, adaptation, stability and customer satisfaction."

Its measurement demands a contextualized assessment that "recognises the unique features and context of each situation" (Altschuld and Zheng 1995:200). Any attempt to apply a universal standard, such as Mohr's (1988) formulaic expression of effectiveness[21] will offer only a very incomplete description. While the multiple facets to effectiveness demand a comprehensive approach, the emphasis on attainment of

[21] Mohr offers a calculation for effectiveness. He states that effectiveness = (R-C)/(P-C), where R is the actual state of a program after it is implemented, P is the planned state, and C is the counterfactual state, which refers to the quantifiable score or level at which the outcome of interest would have been had the program not been implemented.

stated goals and objectives requires a shift in evaluation strategy towards traditional post-positivist attempts to establish cause and effect. The question presents the evaluation strategy with a clear direction by attempting to measure the successful achievement of objectives. In this way this closed question demands a contrasting approach to that required by the previous question.

Q3 How does the particular purpose behind the use of a Stakeholder Dialogue exercise influence effectiveness?

This question recognises the potentially influential role the purpose may have in determining how effective Stakeholder Dialogue is in meeting the needs of all participants. The process must balance the instrumental focus of delivering the stated objectives with ensuring that it does not limit its transformative potential. This is perhaps the greatest claim of Stakeholder Dialogue and where the added value of adopting a participatory approach is to be found. Little attention has been paid to the challenge of pursuing an instrumental goal through a transformative process; this evaluation question addresses this absence. In doing so, this question moves the emphasis of the evaluation towards explanation and learning and away from description and judgement. Q2 seeks to identify the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue in achieving its objectives, while this question requires the evaluation strategy to explain the influence this has on broader measures of success.

This question requires an evaluation strategy which ensures a holistic assessment of effectiveness. To this end the strategy cannot be entirely bound by predetermined goals but must allow the multiple experiences of the participants to emerge. The evaluation strategy must ensure the process of analysis is able to identify the influence of the stated purpose on the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue in meeting the needs of all participants. In order to do this the evaluation must apply rich interpretivist methodologies that allow the evaluator to explore the reasoning behind participants' descriptions of experiences.

Q4 To what extent does Stakeholder Dialogue deliver the predicted benefits of participatory decision-making?

Chapter 2 introduced the numerous intangible benefits associated with participatory decision-making; any assessment of effectiveness must establish the extent to which

Stakeholder Dialogue delivers these benefits. The arguments for greater participatory decision-making are founded on these predicted intangible products that provide Stakeholder Dialogue and similar processes with the added value over traditional decision-making methods. The majority of evaluations concerned with participatory practices have focused either on descriptive measures of process or on describing the more substantive outputs. The result of this has been that the predictions regarding the transformative benefits of participation and the theories on which they are based have been poorly tested. This question recognises this absence in the evaluation literature and directs the evaluation to identify how the various different participants experience these intangible benefits.

Although intangible products, such as heightened levels of trust and greater levels of ownership, are rarely made explicit as goals of a particular process, they nevertheless underpin the use of Stakeholder Dialogue. As a result this question effectively requires a goal-focused evaluation strategy. However, the interdependent and highly personal nature of many of these goals demands a sympathetic interpretative evaluation strategy rather than the normal positivist approach to goal assessment. The resulting approach adopts something of a hybrid position: while qualitative methods provide the depth of assessment they remain focused on the predetermined goals derived from supportive literatures.

Q5 How does the experience of the different participants vary, with regard to the predicted outputs and outcomes of Stakeholder Dialogue?

The evaluation poses this question in response to a number of principles on which Stakeholder Dialogue is based. Common to each of The Environment Council's different lists of principles is an understanding that all participants are equal within the participatory process. The primary means for ensuring this necessary transformation in positions of power, understanding and expectations lies with the facilitation team and the power of the communicative act. The argument developed by The Environment Council is that if there is equality in process then there should be equality in products. This question directs the evaluation to establish the extent to which the inclusionary process of Stakeholder Dialogue delivers on its claim of equality. This is reinforced by a second grounding principle of Stakeholder Dialogue described by the win/win diagram on p67. Although there is no guarantee that Stakeholder Dialogue will deliver

an equally beneficial experience for all participants this claim lies at the heart of the win/win principle. This evaluation question requires the evaluation strategy to test the strength of this claim.

In order to answer this question the evaluation strategy must adopt a subject-centred approach. In this way the assessment is built up around the multiple viewpoints of the participants rather than from a single perspective. The aim of this approach is to capture the variation in experiences rather than to aggregate the multiple descriptions to provide one single measure. The level of potential variation amongst participants coupled with the need to provide an explanation ensures that this question can be effectively answered only through an interpretative strategy. To be effective such a strategy needs to be applied through a rigorous sampling scheme more commonly associated with the positivist criteria of validity and reliability.

Q6 What are the characteristics of the products from Stakeholder Dialogue?

Although this open question ensures the evaluation strategy is not limited to consideration of predetermined features of products, discussions with staff at The Environment Council and the defining goal of Stakeholder Dialogue identify two themes on which the evaluation strategy places particular emphasis. The first of these is concerned with the strength of Stakeholder Dialogue results and, in particular, asks how enduring and stable are the products of participatory decision-making. Stakeholder Dialogue was developed, and is practised, as a tool for sustainable development. The principal goal is to deliver lasting change through the greater understanding and heightened awareness resulting from participatory working. Question six ensures the evaluation addresses the primary purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Long-term studies that establish the persistence of participation products are largely absent from the evaluation literature. Such evaluations can be methodologically challenging but are necessary in order to establish a true measure of effectiveness, especially given the clearly influential but poorly understood role which context can play in determining the nature of Stakeholder Dialogue results.

The second feature or characteristic of the products to be given emphasis by this question relates to the transferability of Stakeholder Dialogue products. This issue was

originally introduced to the evaluation by the CEO of The Environment Council in an early design meeting on the focus of the evaluation. Stakeholder Dialogue involves the participation of representatives of interested constituencies. If the benefits of participatory decision-making are to be fully realised then they must be transferred beyond those individuals who participate to the wider stakeholder community. This question requires the evaluation to determine to what extent this is the case, or indeed, can be the case.

In order to answer this question and to acknowledge the focus of the two themes described above, the evaluation strategy must apply a methodology that captures the subjective understanding of the multiple products. In addition to this, the evaluation strategy must be framed by an approach that allows the Stakeholder Dialogue process to be viewed in a wide context. This is necessary to ensure the evaluation is provided with the means to describe the persistence of participation products over time and, any possible transfer of benefits.

Q7 What determines the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue?

This question requires the evaluation strategy to move beyond the traditional evaluation practice of description and to offer an explanation for any estimate of effectiveness. In doing so the evaluation strategy reflects the CASE context to this study and the demands of the evaluation audience. For the evaluation to have real learning value for The Environment Council the strategy must identify the primary cause and effect processes that determine effectiveness. Only by doing this will the facilitators be able to act on the learning from this study and improve Stakeholder Dialogue. In addition to this action research element to the evaluation strategy, Q7 ensures the evaluation responds to particular academic concerns such as the need to determine "the strength of the association between a theory's predictions and actual outcomes" (Conley & Moote 2003:379).

This question requires the evaluation strategy to strike a methodological balance between a reductionist, predetermined focus on the claims of theory and the unbounded interpretivist goal of establishing contextualized meaning. This is done by adopting a contextually rich qualitative approach that provides the methodology with the means to identify sources of influence, while also considering the causal links described by

theory. Within this framework the evaluation design must ensure it identifies not only the influence of context, but also the contribution made by the defining features of the Stakeholder Dialogue process. To this end, the evaluation strategy introduces elements of quasi-experimental design.

In order to answer each of these seven questions the evaluation strategy set out below rejects the methodological dominance of a single evaluation paradigm and instead embraces the notion of methodological appropriateness put forward by Patton (1990). The following discussion provides an explanation and justification for this position.

5.1.4 A paradigm for evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue

The process of developing a research methodology involves a series of sequential decision-making steps, each one intended to ensure the final means of data collection provides the answers to the original questions. Following the initial framing process of establishing the focus of research, the evaluator must acknowledge the paradigmatic choices they make which determine the evaluation design. The adoption of a particular paradigm establishes "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba & Lincoln 1994:99) and in doing so it effectively serves "to reduce the necessity for painstaking choice by making method decisions routine and obvious" (Patton 1988:128). Two dominant paradigms, the naturalistic and the scientific (Guba and Lincoln 1981), present the evaluator with what appears to be a stark choice in the selection of methods. However, reflecting on the differences between these paradigms and their related methodologies through the window of sponsored evaluation research presents a challenge to the established paradigm–methods linkages. The combined influence of applied research and multiple audiences challenges evaluation to break with the established assumption that a paradigm defines a singular set of methods.

Guba & Lincoln (1981) provide a logical case that competing paradigms are incompatible. For example, one cannot hold a position of embracing the objectivist assumptions of social reality whilst simultaneously adopting the assumptions of constructivism. In presenting this position they argue that such logical incompatibility defines the selection of methods. While acknowledging that competing paradigms

contain incompatible axioms, Patton (1988, 1990) presents an empirical challenge to the logic of exclusive theory-method ties. In developing what he refers to as the "paradigm of choices" (Patton 1990:39), Patton argues that '*in real-world practice, methods can be separated from the epistemology out of which they have emerged*' (Patton 1990:90 emphasis in original). This argument is founded on two key points. The first is an understanding that paradigms should be interpreted as descriptive rather than prescriptive. Seen in this way "the purpose of describing how paradigms typically operate in the real world is to free evaluators from the bonds of allegiance to a single paradigm" (Patton 1988:118). The second is an understanding grounded in empiricism that "pragmatism can overcome seemingly logical contradictions" (Patton 1988:127).

The paradigm of choices provides this evaluation with the necessary flexibility to ensure it can accurately match methods to purpose and context, and in doing so answer a broad set of questions. In adopting this framework the thesis recognises that "the issue has become not whether one has uniformly adhered to prescribed canons of either logical-positivism or phenomenology but whether one has made sensible methods decisions given the purpose of the inquiry, the questions being investigated, and the resources available" (Patton 1990:39). The purpose, questions and resources for this study reject the dichotomy of quantitative/qualitative methods and instead demand a multi-method approach that moves between different theory-method ties. In the discussion below I set out why the following evaluation strategy should be framed by this pragmatic approach.

In the first place, the CASE context to the assessment presents the evaluation with a set of existing questions; these are the original reasons behind The Environment Council's support for the studentship. In being set these questions the evaluation is provided with a particular purpose prior to the adoption of any given epistemological purpose. The evaluation is immediately framed by pragmatic goals rather than by the theoretical questions that might be expected to focus research methods. In addition to the questions posed by The Environment Council, a second audience, represented by the academic context of the research, imposes a set of competing demands. When an evaluation is faced with multiple audiences asking contrasting questions, the limitations of a single theory-method link are exposed. The evaluation is forced to 'pick and mix' methods if

it is to provide answers to both, in effect requiring the evaluator to adopt the role of *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln 1998).

The evaluation questions set out above provide an indication of the competing goals an evaluation strategy must address when trying to establish the effectiveness of participatory decision-making. Individually they each emphasise a different evaluation approach: outcome evaluations (Rossi *et al.* 1999, Schalock 1995), goal-free evaluation (Scriven 1967), and utilization-orientated evaluation (Patton 1986). In order for this evaluation to meet these contrasting requirements it must remove what Patton refers to as "paradigmatic blinders" (Patton 1988:117) and strive to apply the most suitable methodology.

5.1.5 The qualitative/quantitative balance

Having established that a paradigm of choices provides this study with the necessary flexibility, the thesis is then presented with the challenge of identifying appropriate methods. Freeing the methodology from a single theory-method link requires the evaluation to re-establish boundaries to direct the selection of methods. This is achieved through defining the relative value the evaluation strategy places on the epistemologies of positivism and interpretivism. The organic and interdependent process of participation emphasises the value of adopting a strategy that acknowledges the fact that social phenomena are a product of continuous interactions having both meaning and purpose (Guba & Lincoln 1994). This places the emphasis on interpretivist methods of data collection, an approach reinforced by the internal critiques against quantification. The reductionist focus of quantitative methods removes the opportunity to evaluate any influence multiple contextual variables might have on the effectiveness of participation. This is especially limiting given the extent to which a participatory process is a product of its environment. Similarly, any evaluation strategy must acknowledge the multiple meanings and understandings within a participatory process. A process of quantification not only fails to capture such measurements of human behaviour, but also, in seeking to aggregate descriptions of variation, fails to assess Stakeholder Dialogue's goal of equality in products. A quantitative methodology imposes an etic theory on the assessment at the expense of gaining an understanding of

the emic view held by the individuals who participate. This approach immediately limits the potential for discovery and simply applies the assumptions inherent in the poorly tested theories of participation.

However, part of the purpose of this evaluation - to test against predetermined criteria - requires the methodology to apply external theories derived from Stakeholder Dialogue principles and the participation literature. Without doing this the evaluation can only offer an incomplete assessment of current principles of best practice in participation. To ensure an accurate, comprehensive and valid assessment the evaluation must strike a balance between the holistic and the individual, and the quantitative and the qualitative. Baxter and Eyles (1997:505) recognised the challenge in doing this when they described the "apparent tension between the creativity of the qualitative research process – which implies contingent methods to capture the richness of context-dependent sites and situations - and evaluation - which implies standardised procedures and modes of reporting".

In attempting to strike the necessary balance I have organised the methodology into two levels. At the strategic level is the methodology design, while at the level of application is the process of data collection. Such a structure provides the evaluation with an innovative means of combining the learning and judgemental components demanded by the different audiences. This is done through marrying the interpretative value of qualitative data collection methods with the evaluation focus offered by a quasi-experimental design. In many ways this evaluation strategy is the product of an iterative process of design, informed by resources and differing evaluation questions, rather than by a predetermined understanding of evaluation methods. In this way the quasi-experimental design was born out of an understanding of the value of case study evaluation, together with an appreciation of the need to assess Stakeholder Dialogue's defining features. At the same time the strategy is a response to the limited number of potential case studies and access to receptive facilitators. The following discussion reviews the various design features of the evaluation strategy. In each case I highlight the relevant learning from Chapters 3 and 4 to justify the research design.

5.2 Evaluation Strategy

The multi-method approach to this evaluation draws on a number of literatures, principally: program evaluation (e.g. Rossi *et al.*1999), participatory theory (e.g. Bloomfield *et al.* 2001, Healey 1997), and the case study approach (Stake 1998). The result could be referred to as a *retrospective comparative case study method.* In evaluation language this would be termed a *late summative quasi-experimental criterion referenced impact assessment.* However, for the sake of brevity it shall simply be referred to here as the evaluation strategy. This evaluation strategy is defined by six broad themes that set the context for the data collection. These are: retrospective, outcome evaluation, case study, subject centred and comparative.

5.2.1 Retrospective evaluation

Although retrospective evaluation has much in common with traditional summative assessment, in particular in allowing a focus on results (Herman *et al.* 1987, Lyons Morris *et al.* 1987 and Patton 1990), its emphasis on establishing long-term measures of success identifies it as a separate evaluation approach. Despite its applicability to participation evaluation there are very few examples of evaluators adopting a retrospective methodology. One example is provided by Beirele (2002) who carried out a retrospective analysis of 239 cases. However, the meta-survey method applied to the retrospective cases effectively removed any opportunity to place the results in any explanatory context. As far as this study is aware, applying a retrospective case study method within a quasi-experimental design framework represents an original evaluation strategy.

There are a number of different reasons for applying a retrospective outlook to this evaluation. These different arguments can be organised under the following headings: Stakeholder Dialogue, Participation Literature and Evaluation Literature.

Stakeholder Dialogue

Chapter 3 identified Stakeholder Dialogue as being designed and applied to ensure greater sustainability in decision-making. In order for the evaluation to establish a fair

measurement of effectiveness it must address this purpose. The retrospective approach allows the evaluation to look beyond the immediate results and determine to what extent Stakeholder Dialogue delivers sustainable change.

Participation literature

Although it is recognised that context will "have a profound influence on opportunities for progress" in local sustainable decision-making (Burgess *et al.*1998:1457), there remains only limited understanding of the relationship between decision-making process and context. This can be most clearly seen in the absence of any rules regarding 'fitness for purpose' (Studd 2003). While context is clearly a multi-dimensional feature that will vary from case to case, there are some variables that are potentially generic. For instance, O'Riordan (1999) highlights the tensions in attempting to link informal participatory forms of governance to established formal representative democracies. A study by Jones *et al.* (2001) considered the role of geographical contexts and both historical and contemporary social contexts in an evaluation of stakeholder participation in European Marine sites throughout the UK. Although comprehensive in its consideration of variables, it offered only a partial understanding of their influences because it limited its focus to the perspective of just one or two participants. By adopting a retrospective approach this evaluation is provided with the means to identify the role of context in determining the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. This broad focus will ensure the evaluation identifies points of learning for the facilitation team beyond the normal review of process provided by many evaluations. For instance, the approach will allow the evaluation to shed light on the value Stakeholder Dialogue places on maintaining a clear division between content and process throughout both the design and practice of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Explicit justifications for an output or retrospective study can also be found within the participatory literature. Aycrigg (1998) argues that, too often, the emphasis of an evaluation study is placed on the process rather than on the 'afterlife' of the project. Chess (2000) contends that by focusing on longer-term results an evaluation has the potential to inform major policy decisions and track social learning. Innes & Booher (1999) introduce the idea of second and third order effects that may come about years after the process is over. Only through retrospective evaluation will it be possible to establish whether this is the case. The incremental nature of participation products

ensures that a retrospective assessment is likely to offer the most comprehensive description of products.

Evaluation literature

In identifying the shortcomings of process evaluation, Chapter 4 established a strong argument for adopting a retrospective approach that would allow the results of Stakeholder Dialogue to be determined. In addition to the critiques of process evaluation offered by Rossi *et al.* (1999) and Beierle (1998), Schalock (1995) describes a number of reasons why a retrospective evaluation can offer a valuable insight into a program's effectiveness. For instance, the immediate effects following some form of intervention are not the same as those noted over a period of time. In particular some immediate results of intervention do not sustain themselves over time. The development of networks or improved levels of communication, regarded as products of participation, can only be truly assessed over a period of time.

5.2.1.1 Challenges of retrospective evaluation

It is clear that retrospective evaluation is especially apposite to the challenges of evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue. However, it is important to recognise it also poses particular challenges that need to be acknowledged and addressed during both data collection and analysis. These challenges arise in response to the influence of the gap between the participatory exercise and the evaluation. While it is this very same gap that provides the evaluation with significant opportunities, it may also challenge the strength of any link identified between products and process. At a pragmatic level it may be difficult to reach many of the original stakeholders, while other stakeholders may not be able to recall a great deal, although this may actually, in itself, be a valuable piece of data[22]. The post Stakeholder Dialogue context is an influential factor in determining the outcomes that stakeholders associate with their participation. While the retrospective approach allows the evaluation to describe the role of this context in shaping these products, the analysis must also attempt to distinguish between those results that can be traced back to the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops and those that

[22] Brewer 2000 suggests methods of enhancing recall amongst interviewees, including: prompting, multiple elicitation questions and re-interviewing. All of these methods are applied to varying degrees during the data collection process.

have arisen independently. These may be interwoven and at times difficult to separate. This challenge is heightened by the fact that outputs from Stakeholder Dialogue are expected to evolve over time and in response to contextual pressures.

5.2.2 Outcome evaluation

The retrospective approach provides the evaluation with the opportunity to describe the outcomes of Stakeholder Dialogue. The challenge in developing the evaluation design is to ensure it has the means to identify products that are often diffuse, intangible, unpredictable and interwoven with contextual factors, while at the same time maintaining a focus on the stated goals of the process. In order to build this necessary flexibility into the evaluation strategy I have identified two themes within an overarching outcome focus. The first of these is known as goal-free evaluation and the second as goal-focused evaluation. Competing reasons for applying each of these contrasting approaches can be found in both evaluation and participation literature. In the section below I identify these various arguments and in doing so justify the resulting multi-method evaluation.

5.2.2.1 Goal-free evaluation

Goal-free evaluation is an inductive and holistic approach to evaluation that "represents a radical departure from virtually all traditional evaluation thinking and practice" (Patton 1990:116). First suggested by Michael Scriven (1967) as a means of establishing truly objective measures of assessment, goal-free evaluation offers a way to identify actual effects rather than the extent to which intended effects were achieved. In effect, goal-free evaluation rejects the constraints and narrow focus of goal-focused evaluation and therefore opens the data gathering process to the potentially multiple interpretations of outcomes. In his review of qualitative evaluation applications, Patton (1990) describes four reasons for applying a goal-free evaluation strategy:

1. to remove the risk of missing important unpredicted outcomes as a result of focusing on stated objectives;

2. to ensure the value of unanticipated results are recognised by the evaluation rather than being relegated to secondary effects;
3. to remove the perceptual bias resulting from a knowledge and understanding of goals; and
4. to establish evaluator objectivity and independence.

Despite these strong arguments for adopting a goal-free evaluation, and in particular its sympathetic understanding regarding the organic development of participation products, the approach has not been widely applied. The iterative process of deliberation, amongst wide-ranging interests and expectations, challenges any strict predetermined focus and ensures unpredicted products. In addition to this, the multiple individual interpretations of outputs reject the notion of a single-goal focused assessment and require an evaluation strategy that acknowledges the variation in outcomes.

5.2.2.2 Goal-focused evaluation

Goal-focused evaluation describes the majority of evaluation examples from within the program evaluation literature and many within the participation literature. Also referred to as summative evaluation or impact assessment, goal-focused evaluation asks questions that establish "the extent to which a program produces the intended improvements" (Rossi *et al.* 1999:70). The focus on establishing a link between program and product has ensured that goal-focused evaluation remains firmly grounded in the tenets of experimental design.

Just as the organic process of Stakeholder Dialogue requires an inductive approach to evaluation, so its instrumental focus on products demands a deductive approach. Chapter 3 showed how the practice and design of Stakeholder Dialogue emphasises the process as a 'means to an end' rather than an 'end in itself'. There are two principal reasons for the emphasis on products over process. The first of these relates to Stakeholder Dialogue's origins in sustainable development. Stakeholder Dialogue was developed in response to the environmental debates of the 1980's and the powerful rhetoric of sustainable development. The second reason for a product focus is to be found in the incentive for participation. Participation of stakeholders, as opposed to a

demographic sample of the public, reinforces the focus on results and products. The incentive that ensures stakeholder participation is provided by the opportunity to influence an instrumental goal. In other words, Stakeholder Dialogue requires a focus on achieving real change if there is to be effective participation of interested individuals.

By incorporating elements of a goal-focused evaluation, this evaluation strategy is provided with the means to establish the validity of the claims made by Stakeholder Dialogue. Chapter 3 lists a number of benefits that The Environment Council present in their training manuals and Stakeholder Dialogue literature. Rather than being based on empirical observations these claims are rooted in the formative theories of Stakeholder Dialogue, ADR and Strategic Choice. There has been no previous attempt to establish the strength of these claims other than ad hoc assessments made at the end of workshops. A goal-focused assessment requires the evaluation to identify these objectives of Stakeholder Dialogue and then establish the degree to which they were achieved. Without this focus the evaluation might fail to adequately assess the bold claims used to argue for greater use of Stakeholder Dialogue.

Goal-focused evaluation or impact assessment requires the evaluation strategy to establish links of cause and effect between program and products (Rossi *et al.* 1999). Without this, the evaluation fails to adequately test the program, instead it risks simply confirming the assumptions on which any predictions are made. Although "there are many deep and thorny issues surrounding the concept of causality" (Rossi *et al.* 1999:238), innovative design and data collection will allow the evaluation to identify challenges to those accepted theoretical ties between participation and products. In this way the evaluation is provided with the means to advance the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue, providing new learning for both the facilitators and The Environment Council.

In addition to answering the evaluation questions provided by the practitioner audience, a goal-focused approach allows the evaluation to respond to the questions arising from the academic audience. Chapter 2 introduces the growing literature on participatory practices and describes the benefits associated with communicative decision-making. However, these claims have largely gone untested by previous evaluation studies which have often sought to provide normative theoretical descriptions of good practice. In the

absence of rigorous outcome evaluation a process evaluation has little predictive power. In establishing the strength of association between features of process and predicted products, this evaluation provides the necessary empirical evidence to allow future process evaluations to offer predictions on the basis of process description.

It is clear that both goal-free and goal-focused approaches are necessary for this evaluation strategy to answer the contrasting questions posed by the different evaluation audiences. The challenge lies in how to marry these two competing approaches, given the different emphasis they place on methods of data collection and evaluation design. The goal-free approach adopts a holistic and inductive qualitative design that seeks to *discover* the results of a program. In contrast to this, the goal-focused approach embraces an objectivist ontological position in its attempt to establish lines of cause and effect between process and products. A pragmatic approach that emphasises methodological relevance over strict paradigm ties allows me to combine different aspects of both these strategies within what program evaluation refers to as a quasi-experimental design (QED) (Rossi *et al.* 1999).

QED seeks to replicate traditional experimental design by comparing the subject of the evaluation with a second case study that resembles the test case as closely as possible. This thesis presents an interpretation of the QED that emphasises its value as a means of adding to the learning available from a traditional single case study method and rejects the reductive concepts behind its original development. Adopting a QED provides a focused framework in which to apply ethnographic data collection methods relating to both goal-free and goal-focused evaluation. In addition to this, the use of a second non-Stakeholder Dialogue case study provides the evaluation with an additional opportunity to determine the influence of the defining features of Stakeholder Dialogue, over and above that offered by a single case study assessment. This second case ensures the thesis has the potential to reinforce or question the findings emerging from the Stakeholder Dialogue evaluation. It can be seen to act as a 'methodological sieve', helping the evaluation to distinguish between the influence of Stakeholder Dialogue and context.

5.2.3 Case study evaluation

One of the primary vehicles for a qualitative inquiry is the case study approach (Green 1994, Stake 1998). Definitions of what constitutes a case are lacking and for the most part, it remains for the inquirer to justify selection. In many examples the topic of focus is used to define the case study method, be it 'decisions', 'processes', 'organisations' etc. Yin (1994:13) offers a generic definition that describes a case study as an empirical form of enquiry that:

- "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when,
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."

A case study methodology actively acknowledges the interdependent relationship between context and the focus of the study. In order to adopt this focused and holistic study method it must be possible to describe the case boundaries. However, this can be difficult as "not everything is a case" (Stake 1998:97); diffuse and multi-faceted processes such as *teaching* challenge the identification of boundaries, whereas a particular class or an individual teacher presents clear boundaries, identifying them as suitable case study topics. Stakeholder Dialogue may appear diffuse, involving a number of workshops, meetings and outreach exercises, but the fact that its application is linked to a one-off purpose ensures boundaries are clearly defined.

Stake (1998) provides a three-stage typology that serves to highlight the various reasons for adopting a case study approach. An *intrinsic* case study is the appropriate means of gaining a better understanding of an unusual case. The study is driven by an intrinsic interest in a certain example and is not intended as a theory-building tool. Conversely an *instrumental* case study investigates a certain case "to provide insight into an issue or a refinement of theory" (Stake 1998:88). The selection of the case is determined by the extent to which it is representative of the study interest and therefore the level of contribution it can make to current understanding. The third type of study is the *collective case study*. Where there is no single case offering the depth of understanding provided by the instrumental study a researcher may choose to study a number of cases in order to achieve the same goal.

An evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue requires an instrumental case study approach that allows for naturalistic generalisation beyond the particular case (Stake & Trumbull 1982). Rather than taking the form of predictions, such generalisations are regarded as assertions developed from the tacit knowledge earned through involved study. Just as with each of the previous evaluation themes, the case study methodology ensures the evaluation strategy answers the seven questions set out above. Reasons for adopting this approach are provided by Stakeholder Dialogue practice, the participation literature and the challenges of evaluation research.

Stakeholder Dialogue

Although there is great variety in the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue, an early design meeting with facilitators and Environment Council staff identified a strong consensus that a *bespoke* approach was a common feature of all cases. Rather than applying a prescriptive set of methods, each Stakeholder Dialogue process is designed keeping the environment in which it occurs very much in mind. It follows that the evaluation strategy must assess the extent to which this flexibility ensures Stakeholder Dialogue effectively engages with the social, historical and geographical context of each case. A case study evaluation imposes a holistic approach that allows the evaluation to describe the relationship between process of participation and context. In offering this insight into the influence of context on process, and vice versa, the case study evaluation addresses the last of the seven evaluation questions: *what* determines the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue? Yin (1994) identifies the case study strategy as the most suitable research tool for such a question.

Participation literature

There is a growing recognition that context plays an influential role in determining the effectiveness of participatory process (see Jones *et al.* 2001, Petts 2001). This is perhaps especially true of Stakeholder Dialogue. Each case is implemented in response to a certain issue arising from within a context; from the outset the context can be seen to frame the participation that follows. This is in contrast to public participation exercises in which a representative sample of the public deliberate on an issue which is introduced to them. In such cases the participatory process effectively removes itself from many of the contextual features that might influence Stakeholder Dialogue.

The participation of representatives within the Stakeholder Dialogue process ensures it is embedded within a large and dynamic context. Each participant is a representative from his or her particular constituency. The 'hidden participants' that make up each constituency serve to extend the sphere of influence within which Stakeholder Dialogue operates. The retrospective approach, coupled with the holistic perspective of case study research, provides the evaluation with the best opportunity to view the role context plays in determining effectiveness.

Challenges of evaluation research

The case study approach has particular value when used as an evaluation tool. The inherent requirement it imposes for comprehensive engagement with the issue, its context and the participants ensures that the evaluation is responsive to the case study environment and fair in the expectations it places on the process of Stakeholder Dialogue. As an evaluation tool, the case study is an effective means of exploring the limits of generalisability from theory to practice; "a single case as a negative example can establish limits to grand generalisations" (Stake 1998:104).

5.2.3.1 Case study evaluation and quasi-experimental design

The comparative element of a quasi-experimental design presents a competing epistemology to that of the interpretive and holistic learning emphasised by case study research. Stake (1998:98) regards a comparative focus as being contrary to the strengths of a case study: "designed comparison substitutes (a) the comparison for (b) the case as the focus of the study". However, he offers little by way of explanation as to why this must be the case. On the face of it, there is no insurmountable reason as to why, by simply studying two cases, the focus given to each should be any less than if it stood alone. Stake (1998:98) goes on to say that "seldom is there interest in how a case without the phenomenon is different because there are too many ways to be different". Again, though, I would suggest that this is an incomplete criticism of the comparative proposal. Steps can be taken when selecting cases to ensure that variation is identified and considered in analysis. If this can be achieved for those environmental factors seen as influential in determining the case, one will be offered a more comprehensive learning opportunity than that of the single case. Indeed, without this element to

evaluation design the evaluation is limited in its opportunities to either validate or pursue questions further.

The 'thick description' presented by the case study approach also ensures the research has a strong understanding of any variation in context found between the two cases. Any remaining influential variable will be recognised by the method and can then be accounted for in the conclusions.

Support for this approach can be found in the evaluation literature since here, comparison is seen as an essential component in determining the impact of any intervention:

> "Determining impact requires comparing, with as much rigour as is practical, the conditions of targets who have experienced an intervention with those of equivalent targets who have experienced something else". (Rossi *et al.* 1999:236)

The pragmatic paradigm that frames this evaluation strategy provides the flexibility that allows me to apply a case study methodology within a quasi-experimental design. In framing the evaluation within this quasi-experimental design the aim is not to set one case up against another in order to make a judgement about which is 'better'. Instead, the purpose is to offer a second opportunity for learning that has the potential to identify strengths and weaknesses in Stakeholder Dialogue. The principal evaluation case study is selected to represent both an example of good Stakeholder Dialogue practice and a true test of the claims linked to its use. On its own this offers both considerable learning opportunities and a powerful means to determine effectiveness. The second case study is similar to the Stakeholder Dialogue case study in many ways but instead of employing Stakeholder Dialogue it uses an alternative participatory method that differs from the defining features of Stakeholder Dialogue. The evaluation of this secondary case study is directed by the learning and questions emerging from the Stakeholder Dialogue case. The result is an evaluation strategy that rather than detracting from the rich understanding offered by the case approach, enhances the explanatory power of the research.

5.2.5 Subject-centred evaluation

The final theme for this evaluation strategy refers to the level of involvement from stakeholders who participated in the case studies. The principal sources of data for this evaluation are those individuals who participated in the chosen case studies. However, rather than replicate the focus of the evaluation in the data collection process (i.e. the participatory exercise) the evaluation adopts an in-depth, semi-structured interview approach. An interview can be defined as a face-to-face interchange between two people in order to facilitate an exchange of information (Dunn 2000). A semi-structured interview will allow both an open dialogue and the opportunity for the evaluator to cover certain issues. In this way the interviewee is able to introduce new ideas and issues not previously considered while the interviewer is able to ensure that in each case similar questions related to the overall objectives are posed. In permitting this, the interview method engages with both the goal-free evaluation and the impact assessment elements of the evaluation.

Renn *et al.* (1995:6) challenge the subject-centred evaluation method in a critical review that describes the approach "as a zero-sum game – a process which must have winners and losers." In developing their argument they define subject-centred evaluation as "focusing attention on one particular agent" (Renn *et al.* 1995:6), an approach with obvious limitations when faced with the diverse and competing expectations of different participants. This evaluation strategy is built on a different interpretation of what is meant by subject-centred evaluation. Rather then prioritising one evaluation perspective over another, the evaluation reflects Stakeholder Dialogue's principle of equality in participation and allows each participant, or subject, to describe his or her experiences. I refer to this approach as subject-centered because, unlike in normative procedural evaluations, the focus is on the participants rather than on features of process.

This holistic, multi-perspective approach provides the evaluation with the means to develop a credible measure of effectiveness. Stakeholder Dialogue's goals of win/win solutions and equality in results are bold claims given the great variety of largely unknown reasons motivating an individual's participation. By ensuring the method

collects data from a large and representative sample of participants the evaluation acknowledges this challenge and develops an inclusive measure of effectiveness.

The subject-centred evaluation allows the process of analysis to identify potential patterns in the experience of stakeholders. There may be a certain distribution of benefits and results which organise the various participants into groups. For instance, are the benefits experienced by representatives of national agencies different from those enjoyed by local community stakeholders? Any such variation can then be considered in light of the process and the context.

The experiential nature of the results associated with a participatory process requires an appropriate method of data collection. The subject-centered approach allows the evaluation to compare the experiences of the participants with the results predicted by Stakeholder Dialogue and theories of participatory decision-making.

Box 5.1: Summary Box

The evaluation strategy set out in this chapter provides an original and innovative framework with which to determine the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. By adopting 'a paradigm of choices' the thesis is offered a means of answering the different questions of two contrasting audiences. This is achieved through a composite evaluation strategy that brings together a retrospective approach with case study depth, ethnographic richness and the learning opportunities offered by a quasi-experimental design. The aim of this strategy is to provide a framework in which relevant data can be collected in order to answer the seven questions set out above, and in particular to offer not only a description of results but also possible explanations. The following chapter builds on this evaluation strategy and introduces the principal case study and the methods of data collection.

Chapter 6

The Principal Case Study part 1:

Setting the scene for the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet, North East Kent

Introduction

Chapter 6 represents a shift in focus from the strategic methodological discussions of the previous chapter to a statement of practice and empirical reporting. While Chapter 5 provided the thesis with both a description and justification for the evaluation *framework*, the following discussion sets out the description and justification for the evaluation *fieldwork*. In order to do this the chapter situates the methodology within a rich description of context. This contextual background serves both as an important explanatory tool for future data analysis and as the justification for the selection of data collection methods.

Each chapter within the thesis has a particular emphasis or role. Chapter 6 adopts a neutral perspective, in keeping with its role of reporting on the principal case study. This is achieved by organising the chapter into four sections. The first of these sets out the process of identifying the principal case study from amongst The Environment Council archive and concludes by identifying and justifying the selection of a Stakeholder Dialogue process in Thanet, North East Kent. Following this the second section introduces the Thanet case and offers a detailed examination of the multifarious contextual variables surrounding the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The third section describes the Stakeholder Dialogue process, its aims and the techniques used in each workshop. The final section presents the data collection methodologies and the process of data analysis adopted by the evaluation.

6.1 Identifying the principle case study

6.1.1 A process for selection

The challenge of identifying a suitable example of Stakeholder Dialogue demanded an iterative and heuristic process that engaged with The Environment Council staff, facilitators and academics. The first step involved establishing accepted criteria on which I could base my selection from The Environment Council's archives. Such criteria were necessary not only to ensure the support of the facilitators but also to give credibility to the evaluation process. At a more practical level, selection criteria were needed in order to organise The Environment Council's archive and to allow the evaluation to make a systematic choice from amongst a data base that extended back over ten years.

An initial set of criteria was identified from within the relevant literature and through a process of dialogue with members of The Environment Council and facilitators. These criteria are set out in Appendix C. The criteria describe potentially influential contextual variables that might be expected to impact upon the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. In order to refine this list of criteria, and to help target the case selection I approached both the facilitators and interested academics for guidance in applying some priority to the provisional list. I asked a total of fifteen individuals, all with considerable experience in Stakeholder Dialogue and participatory decision making, to qualitatively weight each of the criteria. The intention was to identify any common understanding regarding the influence of contextual variables and to ensure that the chosen case study reflected this. From the group of fifteen that I approached I received five replies. Although this small number offered little opportunity to identify any common ground amongst practitioners, the survey did uncover considerable antipathy amongst the facilitators regarding the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue. For instance one experienced facilitator said[23]:

> "I know there is pressure from certain quarters to evaluate, evaluate, evaluate, but this is mainly coming from people who are not practitioners and who are on the look out for a bit more research funding and want for some reason to

[23] Copies of this correspondence with facilitators is provided in Appendix D

> pigeon hole everything in to a particular way of doing things." Facilitator 18/03/01

Another facilitator said they were "feeling rather irritated about having such a task in their in-tray" while a third facilitator, who was influential in establishing Stakeholder Dialogue, wondered if anybody had told me, "why I walked out of your project before it got started".

Although there were interested facilitators it quickly became apparent that a number of historical examples of Stakeholder Dialogue might not be suitable for evaluation because of the reluctance of the relevant facilitator to engage with the process. Instead of identifying critical contextual variables the survey emphasised the indefinite nature of Stakeholder Dialogue practice.

The critical response from many of the facilitators, coupled with their rejection of any influential ties between context and effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue, demanded an alternative approach to identifying suitable case studies. The emphasis shifted to one of independence and pragmatism. It became increasingly apparent that although The Environment Council had an archive of Stakeholder Dialogue examples there remained numerous practical considerations that challenged the process of case selection.

6.1.2 Criteria for case study selection

Foremost amongst these practical concerns was the need for the evaluation to choose a case with a supportive facilitator. The role of the facilitator is so influential in the planning and implementation of Stakeholder Dialogue that an evaluation would be critically undermined if it did not have access to their knowledge and information. The Environment Council further added to the challenge by limiting the number of suitable facilitators to only five from a total of thirteen. These five had been involved in the development of Stakeholder Dialogue from the beginning and as a result were seen as being true to its principles. The Environment Council's reluctance to sanction the selection of cases from the remaining facilitators provides an interesting indication of both the relationship between the organisation and the practitioners and the practice of Stakeholder Dialogue.

The number of potential cases was further restricted by the necessary focus on a narrow historical window and the challenges of retrospective evaluation outlined in Section 5.2.1.1.

At the heart of an evaluation study is a focus on establishing a measure of change: an evaluation asks how effective was the program in delivering the intended transformation? The emphasis on the transformative power of a particular treatment or program is challenged by the restricted view of a retrospective strategy. This backward-looking approach is deprived of the opportunity to describe base line data from which truthful measures of change can then be made.[24] To ensure an accurate and comprehensive evaluation it was necessary to identify a case study from The Environment Council's archive that contained the required base line information. This is especially important for an evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue because it is initiated in response to particular contextual features. Base-line information, which allows for an informed measure of change, is therefore another important criterion in identifying a suitable Stakeholder Dialogue example.

Just as important as the support offered by the facilitator, is the access and information offered by the Management/Steering Group of a Stakeholder Dialogue case. The vast majority of Stakeholder Dialogue examples describe either a Project Officer or Steering Group made up of a number of key stakeholders, so for any evaluation to be accurate and fair it must have the support of these individuals and access to their information and experiences. This is potentially a challenging proposal. For instance, there is an immediate risk of bias toward cases that are perceived as being a success by the Steering Group — just as with the facilitator there are vested interests that restrict access to those examples that are considered to have failed in some regard. An evaluation can also be a resource-demanding exercise, sometimes with only limited returns for certain individuals. The evaluator must persuade often-busy individuals, who may indeed no longer be stakeholders, to cooperate with the process of evaluation. The necessary support from the key stakeholders is an important but restrictive criterion that effectively limits the number of suitable cases.

[24] The alternative approach of a forward looking, contemporary evaluation is presented with the much greater challenge of having only a set of base line date without any means of accurately describing the long-term effects of the Stakeholder Dialogue process. In this case there will always be an unknown.

There are two other important requirements that this evaluation must consider in selecting an appropriate case study. Firstly, the case must be a typical example of Stakeholder Dialogue. If the evaluation is to provide wider learning for The Environment Council and the academic community, the chosen case study cannot be an unusual interpretation of Stakeholder Dialogue. The difficulty lies in defining what a typical example of Stakeholder Dialogue is. Chapter 3 identified the attempts by facilitators and The Environment Council staff to establish a set of grounding principles and from amongst these different lists it is possible to identify some level of common ground. In order to gain a better understanding of these principles I attended a facilitators' meeting on 16th May 2001 (A copy of the photo report can be found in the Appendix E). The aim of the meeting was to try and identify areas of common agreement amongst the facilitators regarding the principles of Stakeholder Dialogue. Those widely supported principles could then be used to guide the identification of a typical or true example of Stakeholder Dialogue. In the meeting I presented the ten principles described in The Environment Council's training manual; *Enabling Environmental Stakeholder Dialogue* (TEC undated) and looked to the facilitators to identify which ones were actually common to all examples of Stakeholder Dialogue. The discussion that followed reaffirmed their reluctance to acknowledge any common features. The one area where there was agreement refers to the *bespoke* nature of Stakeholder Dialogue, the claim that each case is different and designed to fit the context it occurs within.

The second consideration relates to the need to ensure that the chosen case study describes a testing example of Stakeholder Dialogue. By this I mean the selected case should have been applied in a challenging, yet suitable context. If the evaluation is to be credible, it must address an example of Stakeholder Dialogue that is recognised to have been challenged by the context it occurred within. For instance, a history of deeply entrenched conflict amongst stakeholder groups, multiple competing stakeholder interests, competing national and local concerns, and the restrictive nature of cases bounded by statutory legislation all present challenges to effective Stakeholder Dialogue. Together, the need to identify both a typical and testing example of Stakeholder Dialogue ensures the potential number of suitable cases is further reduced.

Although every attempt should be made to make sure the chosen case study presents a true test of Stakeholder Dialogue, it is equally important to ensure that inadequate funding did not undermine the case. Similarly the case should have sufficient resources such as number of facilitators and suitable project support team while also not being constrained by an unrealistic time frame.

The final criterion for consideration relates to the chosen evaluation strategy and the demands this places on case selection. The aim is to identify two case studies, both identical in every way except for the method of participation. Of course this thesis recognises that any search for two such case studies presents an unrealistic goal. Instead, the evaluation strategy acknowledges the inevitable variation between cases while at the same time striving to minimise the difference between critical variables. In order for the methodology to maximise the learning potential captured by the evaluation strategy the selection of the Stakeholder Dialogue case should not preclude the possibility of a comparison with an alternative approach. Rather it should have a number of broadly generic features that are potentially common to other participatory processes. This last criterion requires the process of selecting a suitable case study to look beyond the examples within The Environment Council archive and to consider them alongside alternative participatory approaches.

The poor cataloguing of The Environment Council archive, and the lack of relevant information on the projects database[25], prevented a systematic process of referencing based on the criteria described above. Instead the selection process drew on the experience of The Environment Council Staff and a small number of facilitators. Through a series of meetings a provisional list of four cases was dawn up. A short description of each is provided below.

I. Hampshire Waste Strategy

In the early 1990s Hampshire had a waste management crisis. Nearly half of its waste was incinerated in four old incinerators that failed to meet EU emission standards. The

[25] The Environment Council's database offered only limited descriptions of previous Stakeholder Dialogue examples. The data was inconsistent but typically included, the budget for the process, the length of time it ran for, the facilitators details and the contact information for the main funder. Information such as number of stakeholders, aims, outputs and descriptions of the Stakeholder Dialogue process were absent.

Council proposed replacing them with one large and modern incinerator. However, this was met with a sustained campaign ('ban the burner') and after two years the plan was abandoned. The Council turned to The Environment Council who established advisory panels to inform the Council and direct the tenders from waste management contractors. The Environment Council described the process as producing a new waste strategy, which incorporated the views of community groups (Acland 1999 and Baines 1995).

II. Thanet Coast Management scheme

Between 1998 and 2000 four Stakeholder Dialogue workshops were used to produce a scheme of management for the Thanet coastline in north east Kent. In March 1995 23 miles of coastline were designated under the European Habitats Directive[26] as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC)[27]. This statutory designation placed equal responsibility on each of the relevant authorities[28] to ensure that certain ecological habitats were maintained in what is referred to as favourable condition[29]. This responsibility is met through the implementation of a scheme of management.

III. Brent Spar

Following the international outcry at the proposed deep-sea disposal of Shell Expro's Brent Spar, The Environment Council was approached to run a Stakeholder Dialogue process. Between 1997 and 1999, seven workshops and seminars were organised by The Environment Council throughout Europe. These workshops bought together

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[26] The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was transposed into UK law in October 1994 under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations (from here on in known as the Habitats Regulations.). Article 2 (1-3) of the Habitats Directive sets out the aims adopted by the Habitats Regulations. These are as: "*to contribute towards ensuring bio-diversity through the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.*" In order to ensure this is achieved "*measures taken pursuant to this Directive shall be designed to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of community interest*". Such measures should "*take account of economic, social and cultural requirements*" (Council Directive 92/43/EEC: p3). Suitable sites are identified by the statutory nature conservancy councils based on the procedures, scientific principles and criteria contained in Article 4 and Annex III of the Habitats Directive (JNCC Report 270).

[27] Special Areas of Conservation are submitted to the European Commission as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC). These designated areas are the principle means by which the Habitats Directive aims to achieve the favourable conservation status of wild flora and fauna of Community interest (DETR 1998d). From these sites the European Commission will then adopt a list of sites as sites of Community importance, the Government expects all cSACs to qualify as sites of Community importance (DETR 1998d).

[28] A relevant authority is any statutory or public body with local legislative powers or functions "which have, or could have, and impact on the marine area within or adjacent to a European marine site. Relevant Authorities also have powers to establish a management scheme for a European marine site." A competent authority is any statutory body or public office exercising legislative powers (DETR 1998d).

[29] A natural habitat is defined as being in favourable condition when: "its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing" (Council Directive 92/43/EEC: Article 1).

between 30 and 60 stakeholders from across NW Europe including NGOs, scientist, academics, consumer groups and industry.

IV. Good Practice Guidelines for Renewable Energy

In response to what, at the time, was the largely unexpected opposition to the notion of wind energy, The Environment Council were asked to facilitate the production of a set of good practice guidelines for the wind industry. Following an initial introductory workshop of approximately forty stakeholders, smaller drafting groups were established to produce the guidelines. The final document was seen as being "owned by all those who contributed" (Acland 1999:30).

6.1.3 Justifying the selection of Thanet

It soon became apparent through reviewing each of these cases that the Thanet Coast example came closest to meeting each of the criteria described above. Importantly, the principal facilitator was encouraging and welcomed the evaluation proposal, as did the leader of The Environment Council project team for the Thanet case. Together with a real willingness to cooperate from two stakeholders from key organisations, the evaluation was assured access to all the major sources of information. The Environment Council's recognition of the Thanet workshops as a typical example of Stakeholder Dialogue justifies its selection for this evaluation. Appendix F presents the case study material that The Environment Council has produced, identifying Thanet as a typical example of effective Stakeholder Dialogue practice. Unlike the other potential case studies the Thanet example is provided with base line information from two earlier studies. Jones *et al.* (2000) and Pound (1999) both offer descriptions of the history and context that led to the first workshop. Much of what these reports say suggests that the Thanet case provided a testing and challenging context for Stakeholder Dialogue. This was backed up through meetings with the facilitator and the project leader from within The Environment Council. The Thanet project was supported by a successful European Objective 2[30] application that provided sufficient funding for the two-year project. This financial support was backed up by a team of facilitators including a number of relevant authority staff trained in facilitation techniques.

[30] Objective 2 funding is a European regeneration-funding program that targets areas meeting criteria of socio-economic deprivation.

The national conservation policy that framed the Thanet case provides the evaluation with a suitable context in which to apply a quasi-experimental evaluation strategy. The Thanet coast was part of a suite of marine sites that were designated as cSAC sites in 1995. At each of these sites the relevant authorities were tasked with producing a scheme of management using methods that recognised the value of stakeholder participation. Although there is much that is different between these sites the boundaries set by the Habitats Directive makes it possible to identify a number of key commonalities. Principal amongst these is a shared purpose; following on from this there is a degree of similarity in the stakeholder interests represented in each of the participatory processes. For instance, the same national interests can be seen participating in the production of each of the management schemes, whilst at the same time many of the local groups represent very similar interests and concerns to similar organisations elsewhere in the country.

The timing of the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops offered the evaluation the best opportunity both to identify the outcomes and to be able to establish a link to the actual process of participation. The last workshop occurred in June 1999 and the management scheme was launched early in the summer of 2000. It was felt that any case older that this would present problems in terms of locating participants and allowing the evaluation to make confident links between process and products.

A secondary reason for the selection of Thanet stems from an increasing interest in the use of participatory methods in the management of marine areas (e.g. Brown *et al.* 2002, Burbridge 1997, Jones 1999a, Olsen *et al.* 1997, O'Riordan & Ward 1997). Marine areas pose particular management problems as there is often an absence of any clear property rights and therefore management practices face additional difficulties. The use of deliberative participatory techniques in such situations presents a strong test of their ability to generate momentum, co-operation and agreement. Jones *et al.* (2001) describe the Natura 2000[31] management scheme process as providing an excellent opportunity to establish a long-term indicator of the effectiveness of participatory decision-making processes. This evaluation is amongst the first to respond to this

[31] Natura 2000 is the title given to the network of sites designated under both the Habitats Directive (Special Areas of Conservation) and the Birds Directive (Special Protection Areas) (DoE 1995).

opportunity and offer, an in-depth assessment of participatory decision-making's effectiveness as a tool for delivering sustainable coastal management.

The above discussion justifies the selection of the Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue process for this particular evaluation strategy. The following section offers a detailed description of the various components that made up the Thanet context.

6.2 Thanet: economic concerns and conservation imperatives

6.2.1 Introduction

Thanet is widely recognised as being the most economically deprived area within the county of Kent[32]. In an attempt to reverse this situation Thanet District Council have long pursued an agenda based around economic regeneration and development. However, Thanet is also of considerable conservation importance, its coastline is internationally valued for its chalk cliffs, reefs and populations of migratory birds. For the District Council this conservation value has hampered a number of attempts at coastal development. The designation of the majority of the coastline as a cSAC in 1995 was seen as significant cause for concern and led to the Council lodging an objection with the Secretary of State for the Environment. Despite being the relevant authority with the greatest geographical coverage of the site and the greatest number of powers and functions, they effectively removed themselves from the process of producing the management scheme. In an attempt to move the production of the management scheme forward another relevant authority (English Nature) suggested a collaborative approach that would engage with the concerns of Thanet District Council. This case study is focused on the use of Stakeholder Dialogue to resolve this impasse and produce an implementable management scheme.

[32] Thanet it is Kent's most deprived district and ranks 60th in a list of England's most deprived local authority districts. This description is explained by the fact that Thanet scores in the 25% most deprived districts in all six deprivation categories (employment, education skill, training, geographical access to services and income and health deprivation and disability) (TDC 2004). Incidence of violent crime in Thanet in the period 2000/01 was 14.1 per 1000 population. This is 47% above the county average and 24% above the national average (Thanet Community Safety Partnership 2002). A study by Beatty and Fothergill (2003:57) of the economies of seaside town describe Thanet as having a real unemployment figure of 5.4% (and a real figure of 11.7%). This compares to a figure for Kent of 1.9%. The dominant theme to emerge from amongst these and additional statistics is that Thanet stands out as being particularly deprived within the county of Kent.

6.2.2 Context of the Thanet case study

The context of the Thanet case is a dynamic and ambiguous product of multiple variables with no explicit boundary to focus the evaluation. A picture of the context is built up throughout the process of evaluation, put together through a combination of different sources. Relevant literature from local libraries and participating organisations along with web based information and over thirty in-depth interviews all helped to piece together a rich picture of the background to the Thanet workshops.

In recognition of this contextual complexity this review applies a systematic approach to ensure that all potentially influential variables are considered. In considering the various features of the Thanet context it is possible to identify two scales on which different variables can be seen to operate. A number of potential influences such as geographical location, historical context and the wider social and economic picture of Thanet can be seen to operate at a *macro level.* They are independent of the participatory process and although they may impact upon its effectiveness they remain largely unchanged as a result of doing so. A second suite of contextual variables can be described as operating at the *micro level.* This level describes a set of dynamic and responsive variables that are closely tied to the process of participation. Many have arisen as a result of the need for the participatory process whilst others have come about directly through the process of Stakeholder Dialogue. For instance the Habitats Directive is an influential piece of legislative context that is closely tied to the participatory approach.

6.2.3 Macro features of context

I. Geography of the Thanet case

Thanet is a coastal area of Kent in South East England. Often referred to as the Isle of Thanet, the region is bordered along two sides by the English Channel and on a third by the River Wantsum. This river began silting up in 1499; prior to this it had been known as the Wantsum Channel and had effectively separated Thanet from the rest of Kent. The coastline forms a peninsula stretching from Herne Bay in the North round to Sandwich Bay in the south. Consisting of soft chalk cliffs and sheltered bays, the

Thanet coast has provided safe points of harbour for hundreds of years. St. Augustus landed at Pegwell Bay in 596 AD, whilst Ernest Shackleton set sail on Endeavour from Margate. The coastline of Thanet is dominated by 23km of continuous chalk cliff, representing 20% of the coastal chalk in Britain (NEKEMS Management scheme 2001). Equally distinctive, although not so obvious, are over 250 hectares of chalk reef, some of which is exposed only during spring tides. Map 1 below provides a detailed picture of the local geography of the Thanet coastline.

The island geography of Thanet has given the people of Thanet a strong sense of local identity. The area is still known as the Isle of Thanet, a title reinforced by the local newspaper, the Isle of Thanet Gazette. There remains a sense in which Thanet is seen as being removed from the rest of Kent; amongst the older generation there are those that can remember having to show their identity card when crossing the Wantsum Channel during the Second World War. The sense of detachment and identity associated with an island community has been reinforced by the isolation of Thanet's economic decline amongst the relative prosperity of surrounding Kent. Together, the relative isolation and economic standing of the area has led to a defensive local community that might regard 'outside' input as unhelpful and ignorant of Thanet's needs and history. This presents a challenging environment for any participatory process that aims to introduce a national policy, such as the Habitats Directive, to the local community. A failure to recognise an apparent lack of trust in external organisations such as English Nature may be influential in determining the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue.

This understanding that people from outside Thanet do not understand or appreciate the area is borne out in the comments from the representative of the local Water Ski Club. She said she did not "feel that things run by people who don't know the area can ever be run probably." She went on to describe her attachment to the area and how outside interests might pose a risk to this: "now I don't say Thanet's the most marvellous place on earth, but it's my patch and I wanted to know what was going to happen."

Map 6. 1 The Isle of Thanet

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The high unemployment and economic deprivation of Thanet is frequently cited as the reason for the negative or critical malaise within the wider community. The repeated failure of Thanet District Council to deliver on its ambitious promises of large-scale redevelopment projects has led stakeholders to describe an atmosphere of cynicism and apathy. Evidence of this can be found in the comments of Stakeholder Dialogue participants. One individual spoke of the repeated false starts that Thanet had witnessed in attempting to turn around the economic decline.

> "Yes there have been various incidents but to be perfectly honest in this area there are so many pie in the sky schemes that you read about and a lot of them are environmentally sensitive that just never come to fruition anyway." (Representative of Kent Land Sailing Club)

A local geologist associated the indifference of the local community with the failings of the District Council.

> "Well one of the problems in Thanet is the overwhelming sense of apathy in many, many things. That again stems from a long history of councils that have abused the whole system. It is deeply ingrained."

This picture of the local community is backed up by comments from the Director of Planning at Thanet District Council.

> "There is a tendency in Thanet sometimes to be totally negative about everything....., it's a very poor area, very high unemployment all those sorts of things. Over many, many years now a lot of people have come with promises of all sorts of things, unfortunately very few of them have ever been delivered. So there is a scepticism among the population here that you probably wouldn't get in most areas."

Although the Isle of Thanet is largely an area of arable farming, the coastline is dominated by an urban fringe that runs almost unbroken around the eastern point. The three towns of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate make up the bulk of Thanet's population of 126, 702 (TDC 2004) and ensure Thanet has a population density of 12.36 persons per hectare (compared to the Kent average of 3.54 persons per hectare) (TDC 2004). This population is seen to rise dramatically over the summer months as over 1.7 million day visitors come to the region.

Historically Thanet's economy has been based on the tourist income associated with the traditional English seaside resorts of Ramsgate, Margate and Broadstairs. Over the years this has been supported by Ramsgate Harbour, which at one time handled both passengers and freight, and by a medium-sized fishing fleet of approximately forty boats. Over the years the number of visitors coming to Thanet has steadily declined and of those that do choose to visit, few stay overnight. The decline of the tourist industry and the absence of any significant alternative economy have left Thanet as one of the two poorest areas in South East England, a position borne out by its receipt of European Objective 2 funding.

In their current Local Plan[33], Thanet District Council highlight the economic deprivation associated with the region.

> "Despite its location in the South-East of England and its attractive environment Thanet has suffered from long term economic and social problems. Unemployment has, for many years, been well above the Kent average and social deprivation exists in many parts of the district. (Thanet Local Plan 2002:1)

The Thanet Local Plan positions itself as the tool by which future land use can be directed to reverse the economic decline.

> "In itself this Local Plan cannot resolve the economic and social problems being experienced. What it can do however, is, in land use terms, provide the policies and guidance that will facilitate the investment necessary to reduce these problems while protecting the fine natural and built environment which the Island enjoys." (Thanet Local Plan 2002:1)

Thanet District Council's commitment to economic regeneration, spelt out in the Local Plan, and supported by Objective 2 funding, plays an important role in framing the Stakeholder Dialogue case. At the macro scale of context, the influence of this regeneration imperative is most keenly seen in the history to the Stakeholder Dialogue process.

II. History of the Thanet Case

The Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue case is a response to a history of debate within Thanet regarding land use planning and conservation. The commitment from among the relevant authorities to a participatory approach that went beyond DEFRA guidance[34] is a product of this history. From an early stage in the Thanet case there was an understanding amongst the relevant authorities that Stakeholder Dialogue offered the preferred method of participation demanded by this conflictual history. In participation terms it was thought to offer 'fitness for purpose'. The challenge facing the facilitation team lies in being able to accurately recognise this history so that the participatory

[33] Along with the area Structure Plan the Local Plan makes up the Development Plan for a certain area. The Local Plan sets out detailed policies and proposals to guide development and is used by the council as the basis for their decision-making in the area.

[34] In 1998 DEFRA produced a guide to the Habitats Regulations and to the preparation of management schemes for European Marine Sites. This guidance sets out a structure for stakeholder participation based on Advisory Groups feeding information to a Management Group consisting of relevant authority representatives (see DETR 1998d). This is a hierarchical system as apposed to the flat structure encouraged by Stakeholder Dialogue.

process they design is sympathetic and therefore effective. This review is presented with a similar challenge in describing the relevant aspects of Thanet history. In attempting to meet this challenge, Stakeholder Dialogue's claim of being contextually aware is shown to be especially ambitious. Without the benefit of hindsight offered to this retrospective description, the opportunity to identify influential historical factors becomes significantly reduced.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, growing pressures for economic development on what was often environmentally sensitive land led to frequent clashes between environmental groups and developers (examples include the protests surrounding the Newbury bypass and the Manchester Airport extension). During the late 1990s successive planning proposals by Thanet District Council resulted in two long running public debates between the local authority and the then Nature Conservancy Council (Jones *et al.* 2001). The first of these related to a proposed sea wall across one of the last remaining stretches of chalk cliff, while the second concerned the building of an approach road to Ramsgate that would destroy cliffs and caves. It quickly became clear to campaign groups, such as the Pegwell and District Association, that the proposed 18 metre wide sea wall was simply another way of Thanet District Council ensuring the approach road was built (President of Pegwell and District Association pers. com. 6/06/02). This proposal eventually collapsed without getting to the Public Inquiry stage. Instead it simply eroded already poor levels of trust between local campaign groups and the members of Thanet District Council. Both disputes provoked widespread public interest with headlines such as *Green Slime Versus Jobs* appearing in the local paper (Jones 1999b).[35] The newspaper cutting below (Isle of Thanet Gazette, Friday February 9, 2001, Isle of Thanet Gazette 19th June 1987) offers another example of the emotive language used to describe the story in the local press.

Could access road cause an ecological disaster?

[35] This referred to a specialist species of the *Chrysophycease* algae protected by SSSI status (SSSI Notification 1990).

Concern over chalk cliffs and caves

Interviews with stakeholders from Thanet suggest that these disputes have left a complex legacy; their impact appears to be pervasive and lasting, although time has ensured it is not always recognised. In a number of cases, local community groups shifted their focus in response to these debates and campaigned actively against the proposed road, although the dispute has been resolved, the focus on coastal conservation has remained. In this way, certain local organisations have gained expertise and understanding on issues associated with conservation and the workings of Thanet District Council.

The decline in relations between the national conservation agency and the local authority as a result of these protracted debates is widely acknowledged on both sides and is a driving reason behind the adoption of the participatory approach.

One of Thanet District Council's planning officers provided a description of the decline in working relations between the council and English Nature.

> "Well I don't know the details but I'm aware there has been certain planning applications where there has been conflict, i.e. Pegwell Bay Hover Port site. Historically the economic aspirations of Thanet often conflicted with the environmental remit of English Nature and....Thanet [District Council] saw another designation layer [the cSAC] in a very black and white way and saw it as very negative impact on their economic aspirations." (TDC Planning Officer)

This picture is supported by similar comments from the English Nature Project Officer for the Thanet area.

> "I'm certainly aware of the fact that conservation and the interests of Thanet District Council have often been in conflict. It's partly historic and it's partly inevitable because Thanet has problems, economic problems, and if someone comes up with an idea that is going to raise jobs, the council of any complexion will say yeah, terrific and override any conservation interest." (English Nature Project Officer)

The Director of Planning within Thanet District Council provides a slightly more colourful description of this relationship between the economic interests and nature conservation.

> "I have to say the nature conservation side of things actually is a little less than flexible at times to people who actually want to do things. The view amongst our members is that English Nature have been sent from Satan, because they do take things to extremes at times." (Director of Planning TDC)

At the level of the relevant authority this debate represents an important historical contextual feature that the process of Stakeholder Dialogue identified and sought to remove. However, what the process understood less well was how this same debate was reflected amongst members of the community and the impact these public disputes had on how the main actors were perceived. The economic agenda ensures there are competing views between those members of the local community who wish to see regeneration and those who regard damage to the coastline as an irreparable scar on Thanet. It is clear that not only does the debate over coastal land use permeate throughout interested members of the community but also that it ensures interest groups reaffirm their opinions of the main actors. In some cases this can mean a growing cynicism of Thanet District Council or strengthened perceptions of English Nature as an 'outside' organisation that neither understands nor helps Thanet. The extent to which the design of the Stakeholder Dialogue process is aware of the wider influence this planning debate has on the Thanet community is limited by the number of stakeholders it engaged with during the design stage. The facilitation team developed the process with relevant authority staff but not with those individuals from local groups who were eventually invited to participate.

Evidence of the legacy from the debates that preceded the Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue workshops can be found in the background information provided by interviewees. It is clear that many participants had little faith in Thanet District Council's commitment to a conservation agenda. The history of development proposals offered little encouragement to those representing local environmental interests. For instance, the representative of a local residents association spoke of the Council's repeated commitment to see economic development on what she regarded as a site of conservation importance.

> "Ever since then the Council have been trying to develop the site, because it was a hover port, of course it shouldn't be, it's a wild nature reserve, it's part of the National Trust nature reserve. The National Trust is very interested in acquiring it, but the Council won't take any notice of them because it's not going to bring enough money in. (President, Cliffs End Residents Association)

Another participant from the workshops, the Local Agenda 21 officer, (a volunteer position) described the sense of frustration she experienced in the face of Thanet District Council's reluctance to acknowledge the conservation value of the coastline.

> "There is just an enormous frustration....there is a feeling that there isn't anything you can do about it, and for a number of years they keep electing a different council, but of course that's not making any difference at all because they're all as naïve and inexperienced as each other and the officers are the same you see" (LA21 Officer)

Seen alongside the more overt conflict between relevant authorities these quotes provide an indication of the complex environment within which the Stakeholder Dialogue process occurred. Hidden behind the open debate between Thanet District Council and English Nature, the beliefs and perceptions of local stakeholders provide a second level of conflict. Interviews with the lead facilitators and key stakeholders suggested that the Stakeholder Dialogue design was largely unaware of this. The diffuse influence of this history of conflict within Thanet immediately challenges Stakeholder Dialogue's claim of contextual awareness.

Box. 6.1 Summary Box

The *macro* features of context describe the existing environment of Thanet; they are often complex and diffuse, challenging Stakeholder Dialogue to consider them in the design of the process. In this case the Stakeholder Dialogue process was aware of the history of debate that had led to a decline in working relations between the national conservation agency and the local authority. However, in addition to this important feature the Thanet case was also framed by a combination of an island geography that led to a sense of detachment from the rest of Kent, a declining local economy and a hidden but pervasive legacy from a decade of local debate regarding coastal issues. Each of these themes might be expected to impact upon the effectiveness of the Stakeholder Dialogue process, especially if they go unrecognised in the design process.

The arrival of the cSAC designation in 1995 to an environment dominated by economic decline and debate over coastal management established a new and immediate context that led to the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The features of this second level of

context arise in response to the requirements of the designation and the demands of adopting a participatory approach. In this way this context is dynamic and responsive, both influencing and being influenced by the process of participation. I refer to this as the micro context because it can be seen to be embedded within the wider established context set out above.

6.2.4 Micro features of context

I. The Habitats Directive

The Stakeholder Dialogue process in Thanet was the culmination of a series of events triggered by the designation of the Thanet coast as a site of conservation importance. The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC) are the two major conservation tools for safeguarding habitats and species of European importance found within the UK. The Habitats Directive requires member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) while the Birds Directive requires member states to classify Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Together these designations make up what is know as the Natura 2000 Network (DETR 1998). In March 1995 two areas of Thanet coast were proposed as suitable SACs. Together with an already existing SPA (designated in 1992) the resulting area of designated land makes up 42km of coastline. In addition to these European designations, Thanet coast has four sites of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), one Ramsar site[36] and a National Nature Reserve managed by the National Trust. These designations offer a good indication of the conservation value placed on the Thanet coastline and the consequent need for sympathetic management.

The Thanet coastline is recognised as being of international importance for a number of different species and habitats. The Thanet Coast candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) qualifies for the following Annex I habitats as listed in the Habitats Directive:

- Reefs
- Submerged or partially submerged sea caves.

[36] The Ramsar Convention in Iran in 1971 marked the first international nature conservation agreement. A Ramsar designation is intended to help protect internationally important wetlands.

The Sandwich Bay cSAC qualifies for the various dune habitats that run along the back of the bay, whilst the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Special Protection Area is designated for three bird species (English Nature 2000):

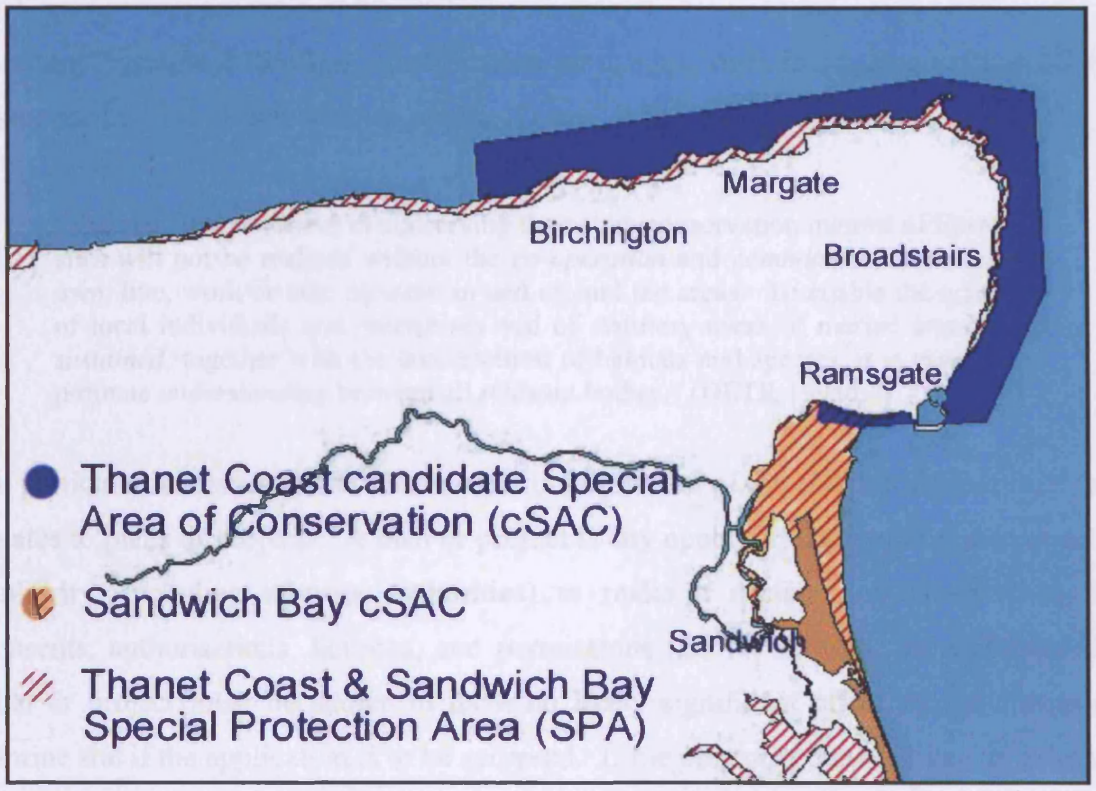
- Breeding little tern (*Sterna albifrons*)
- Wintering golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)
- Wintering turnstone (*Arenaria interpris*)

Together these designations are known as the North East Kent European marine sites (NEKEMS Management scheme 2001, English Nature 2000). For terrestrial Natura 2000 sites the delivery of the Habitat Regulations is achieved through existing SSSI management practices as set out in the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Anon 2001). The absence of SSSI status below the low water mark[37] demands a different approach for marine sites. Articles 33 to 36 of the Habitats Regulations make special provisions as to European marine sites. Of particular importance are Regulations 33 (2) and 34 (1) set out below:

> "**33 (2)** As soon as possible after a site becomes a European marine site, the appropriate nature conservation body shall advise other relevant authorities as to-
> a) the conservation objectives for that site[38], and
> b) any operations which may cause deterioration of natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species, for which the site has been designated." (Anon:20)
>
> "**34 (1)** The relevant authorities, or any of them may establish for a European marine site a management scheme under which their functions (including any power to make byelaws) shall be exercised so as to secure in relation to that site compliance with the Habitats Directive." (Anon:20)

[37] Under current legislation SSSIs can only extend to the jurisdiction of the Local Authority, this ends at the low water mark.
[38] This is known as the Regulation 33. Advice.

Map 6.2: The location of each of the European conservation designations along the Thanet coast.



These two regulations highlight the principal mechanisms by which the nature conservation body and other relevant authorities meet their statutory obligations. Alongside these regulations the relevant authorities are guided by two over-arching principles. The first of these is the voluntary principle, set out in a guide to the Habitats Directive by the then Department of Environment as:

> "The management of sites through voluntary agreements, between owners, occupiers, managers and users on the one hand and the statutory nature conservation agencies on the other, is better than a coercive approach." (Department of Environment 1995:11)

The emphasis placed on voluntary management agreements is supported by a commitment to implementation through consultation[39]. This can be most clearly seen in the DETR guidance on marine cSAC implementation (DETR 1998d) where the Government articulates its support to sustainable management through consultation. Guiding Principle 2.14 says that:

[39] It is worth highlighting that this is simply a commitment to consultation and does not describe any requirement for more developed and engaged levels of participation.

> "...The Government is committed to effective implementation and considers the best way to achieve this is through continuing consultation and co-operation, particularly at the local level" (DETR 1998d:7)

Guiding Principle 2.15 offers a justification for this approach in alluding to the products associated with a consultation approach. I have highlighted these benefits in italics.

> "The principal objective of conserving the nature conservation interest of European sites will not be realised without the *co-operation* and *commitment* of those who own, live, work or take pleasure in and around the areas. To enable the activities of local individuals and enterprises and of statutory users of marine areas to be *sustained*, together with the conservation of habitats and species, it is essential to promote *understanding* between all relevant bodies." (DETR 1998d:7)

Of particular relevance to the Thanet case is the section of the Habitats Regulations that relates to plans or projects. A plan or project is any operation that requires a competent authority (including relevant authorities) to make a decision on applications for consents, authorisations, licences, and permissions (DETR 1998d). In each case the plan or project must be shown to have no likely significant effect on the European Marine site if the application is to be accepted. If the plan or project is likely to have an adverse effect on site integrity then the application should be turned down except in the case where there are "imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature" (DETR 1998d:24). The necessary process of assessment required to obtain consent on a plan or project acts to extend the planning process and place a burden of responsibility on the sponsor and competent authority. The additional costs and time demanded by the responsibility to maintain the designated site in a favourable condition may act as a disincentive to developers.

II. Reaction to the designation

Two relevant authorities reacted to the designation by lodging objections with the Secretary of State for the Environment. Both Thanet District Council and the Thanet District Council Harbour Authority opposed the designation of the Thanet Coast cSAC. The port authorities were concerned about how their current and future activities might be impinged on by the surrounding conservation designation. Thanet District Council had specific concerns regarding any future development of Ramsgate Harbour and more widely with regard to the implications for the economic regeneration of the area. An

explanation for the objection was provided by a planning officer from Thanet District Council:

> "To be honest I have to say we wrote back originally as a Council saying, one of the recurrent issues is the whole issue of economic development and tourism. We did write back initially objecting to both [cSAC sites] on those grounds, we later withdrew the objection as a Council to Sandwich Bay [cSAC] because we are in partnership for the NNR down there." (TDC Planning Officer)

This is backed up and added to by the Director of Planning who highlighted the concerns regarding the potential expansion of Ramsgate Harbour:

> "We weren't that keen on the SAC not because of the coastal designation actually but more concerned about the impact it would have on the harbour. The harbour is something we want to develop, the major concern with the SAC was the impact it would have on the potential for expansion, so that sort of tension came out. I have to say there's not the most receptive audience if you like in the council [to the conservation designation] who are keen to see development in the area when they are constantly told by not just EN, but by others as well, that they can't." (Director of Planning, TDC)

In addition to their concerns regarding the potential for future development Thanet District Council were reluctant to divert any of their limited resources towards the designation.

> "There is nothing that goes with the designation that gives you any money to help you do it. ....We're skint, we have been for a long time, there is a reluctance to get involved in this sort of thing when our main concern is actually to get development to create jobs." (Director of Planning, TDC)

Thanet District Council's reaction to the designation makes an important contribution to the development of the micro context. This is especially so given that the majority of the designated coastline falls within the Thanet District, making it the obvious relevant authority to take a lead on developing the management scheme. Their reluctance to become involved in delivering the Habitats Regulations presented a significant obstacle to the development of the management scheme. Just as the original designation triggered Thanet District Council's reaction, so their objections demanded a response from the other relevant authorities. This response proved to be the starting block for the eventual Stakeholder Dialogue approach and the identification of its objectives.

III. Identifying objectives

In 1995, English Nature appointed a part-time Project Officer within their Kent regional office to oversee the development of the Regulation 33 advice and its input into the management scheme. The response of this Project Officer to Thanet District Council's objection was influential in helping to break the deadlock and ensuring the process moved forward.

> "How could they [TDC] take the lead .....they've got an outstanding objection to? They were in this impossible situation. So it became obvious to me that they were never going to run with anything, and at the time we were on a limited contract so it was clear that if anything meaningful was going to happen when I was in the post I was going to have to run with it and make it happen." (EN Project Officer)

It is important to appreciate that the EN Project Officer entered the post with an awareness of consensus building methods and an appreciation of the history surrounding conservation issues in Thanet.

> "I came in to this post knowing that this was adversarial, knowing that this was already at loggerheads. I found the language of consensus building and participation already existed. In the interview for this position I said I wanted to go on Environment Council training." (EN Project Officer)

This personal commitment to participatory methods frames the thinking with which the Project Officer approached Thanet District Council. However, despite the participation rhetoric within English Nature literature that had first directed the Project Officer to this method, there was reluctance from the Kent Office of English Nature to support such open dialogue with Thanet District Council. Instead, they emphasised the need for Thanet District Council to withdraw their objection and to recognise their role as the lead authority.

> "I think that the EN focus would have been on trying to get Thanet to withdraw their objection. Because that was the pressure I was under, that we must get Thanet to withdraw their objection, and I said well I think it would be better to get round a table and decide what the real issues are." (EN Project Officer)

The Project Officer's willingness to place the objection on one side, in an attempt to identify real concerns, was instrumental in identifying the eventual objectives for the Stakeholder Dialogue process that would follow. However, in doing so it did generate

what was to be a recurring tension between the Project Officer's commitment to open dialogue and the priorities of the English Nature Regional Office.

The meeting between the Project Officer and the Director of Planning at Thanet District Council played an important formative role in the establishment of shared objectives. There was a clear understanding from the Project Officer that an exclusive focus on the management scheme would not allow for Thanet District Council's concerns to be addressed and that it would fail to deliver the necessary support. During the meeting it became clear that Thanet District Council had been keen to establish an integrated approach to their coastal management practices for some time. It was suggested that if this could be delivered by the same process used to produce the Management scheme then maybe they would be able to get behind it. The English Nature Project Officer recalls this, saying:

> "during that conversation it was him [Director of Planning] that said, 'well for years we've wanted an integrated, a kind of action plan that integrated our various operations round the coast, and if your process could spit out lots of great new ways of using the coast, it might even get Objective 2 funding.'" (EN Project Officer)

However, the economic decline of the Thanet area and the necessary emphasis placed on income generation and employment opportunities meant that TDC were unlikely to recognise this participatory process as a resource priority unless it addressed these economic issues. As a result of this, it soon became apparent to the EN Project Officer that if there was to be a process that delivered a supported management scheme it would also need to address a range of additional concerns. It was the EN Project Officer's understanding that the concerns of TDC and the conservation of Thanet Coast shared a common group of interested stakeholders and as a result would be best served through a participatory approach. In a review of the Thanet case the Project Officer describes the diverse focus for the Stakeholder Dialogue process:

"In summary it was realised that there were three elements of work which involved the same set of actors:

- the management scheme for the European marine sites;
- the content for a coastal action plan;
- the generation of tourism and recreation initiatives that would lead to jobs." (Pound 1999:5-6)

These multiple goals and the reasons behind their selection represent an important feature of the micro context surrounding the Stakeholder Dialogue process. Together they describe two important assumptions that could influence the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The first of these is found in the understanding that each of these three areas of work 'involved the same set of actors'. The second relates to the belief that this multi-focused process would deliver the necessary commitment to conservation land management that the designation required.

IV. Promotion of Stakeholder Dialogue

There was a growing appreciation from the English Nature Project Officer that the delivery of a supported management scheme alongside economic goals required a participatory approach. With this in mind she attended an introductory training course run by The Environment Council in October 1996. On the basis of this she went on to organise a participatory workshop for the first meeting of the relevant authorities. According to the EN Project Officer, the workshop successfully "broke the ice amongst a group of professionals who had not met before and between whom there were known conflicts of interests" (Pound 1999:14). Following this meeting the relevant authorities met again in April 1997 when the EN Project Officer provided an introduction to the thinking behind Stakeholder Dialogue. A discussion on alternative ways of producing the management scheme concluded with "a strong consensus to use" a participatory approach (Pound 1999:14). Once this commitment had been made, the Project Officer met with The Environment Council "to gain more understanding of the process" (Pound 1999:14). The same Project Officer also took part in a second training course on facilitation methods run by The Environment Council. In May 1997 the Management Group[40] met and agreed that a participatory approach provided an opportunity to deliver not just the necessary management scheme, but also a coastal action plan and 'green' job creation proposals.

[40] Membership of the Management Group was made up of representatives from each of the relevant authorities. Attendance at meetings proved to be quite variable, with some organisations (e.g. Canterbury City Council) choosing not to attend on a regular basis. The remit of the Management Group is not defined in the minutes of the first meeting (see Appendix F for a copy of these). However, a report by the English Nature Project Officer described its role as "one of guiding the best design of the workshops to cover all the necessary aspects" (Pound 1999:19).

V. Objective 2 funding

Although there is shared responsibility amongst the relevant authorities to maintain the designated European marine site in favourable condition there are no additional resources to enable them to do so. Delivery has to be managed within existing budgets. The costs associated with a professionally managed participatory process required the Management Group to identify potential funding sources. By extending the remit for the process beyond conservation management to include job creation and coastal integration, new funding streams became available. In particular, the EC Objective 2 status granted to Thanet offered a potential source of funding. It is unclear where the suggestion to apply for Objective 2 funding first came from. The EN Project Officer remembers the Thanet District Council Director of Planning raising the idea while his comments suggest he does not understand how such a bid was ever successful. Asked whether there was a discussion about the use of Objective 2 funding he said:

> "Ehm, yes, it wasn't with me I have to say. I presume it must have been the regeneration manager of the day. There is a whole section in Objective Funding about nature conservation issues ..... but the basis would have been presumably on green tourism because Objective 2 is about employment and god knows how it got through." (Director of Planning, TDC)

As well as challenging the idea that the original suggestion came from within the planning department at Thanet District Council this quote offers an indication of the level of ownership regarding the Objective 2 funding application from within that department. In doing so it can be seen as an indication of the strength of the Council's commitment to the goals of job creation and integrated management demanded by the Objective 2 application.

Although Thanet District Council backed the application for Objective 2 funding and supported the proposed participatory method they were not prepared to make any significant commitment or take on any additional responsibilities. Officers representing the various interests within the Council were instructed to participate in the Management Group and participatory workshops with only a watching brief.

> "I remember their officers came to the meetings and said 'well we can't make any official comment because our members don't recognise there is any involvement required here'" (Environment Agency representative)

In January 1998 Objective 2 funding was secured for the proposed participatory process. Although this was an unusual application, the goals of job creation and integrated coastal management ensured it met the criteria applied by the Objective 2 panel (Jones 1999).

Having secured the necessary funding, the contract to run the participatory process was put out to tender. Six applications were received with the eventual tender going to The Environment Council as they were "the only one to maintain the principle of 'deciding with [the stakeholders] not for'" the stakeholders (Pound 1999:14). The contract was let to The Environment Council in April 1998.

Box 6.2: Summary Box

In 1995 two areas of Thanet coastline were designated as Special Areas of Conservation. The introduction of this designation to the Thanet coastline triggered a sequence of responses that, along with the supporting legislation, established an immediate context to the Stakeholder Dialogue process that would follow. In particular, this *embedded* context is shaped firstly, by TDC's objection to the designation and secondly, by the commitment of the EN Project Officer to a participatory approach. Together these two factors ensured that a participatory process was used to deliver three separate objectives. Financed by a regeneration fund, only one of the objectives is linked to the demands of the conservation designation. The remaining two are concerned with job creation and integrated coastal management.

6.3 Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet

6.3.1 The workshops

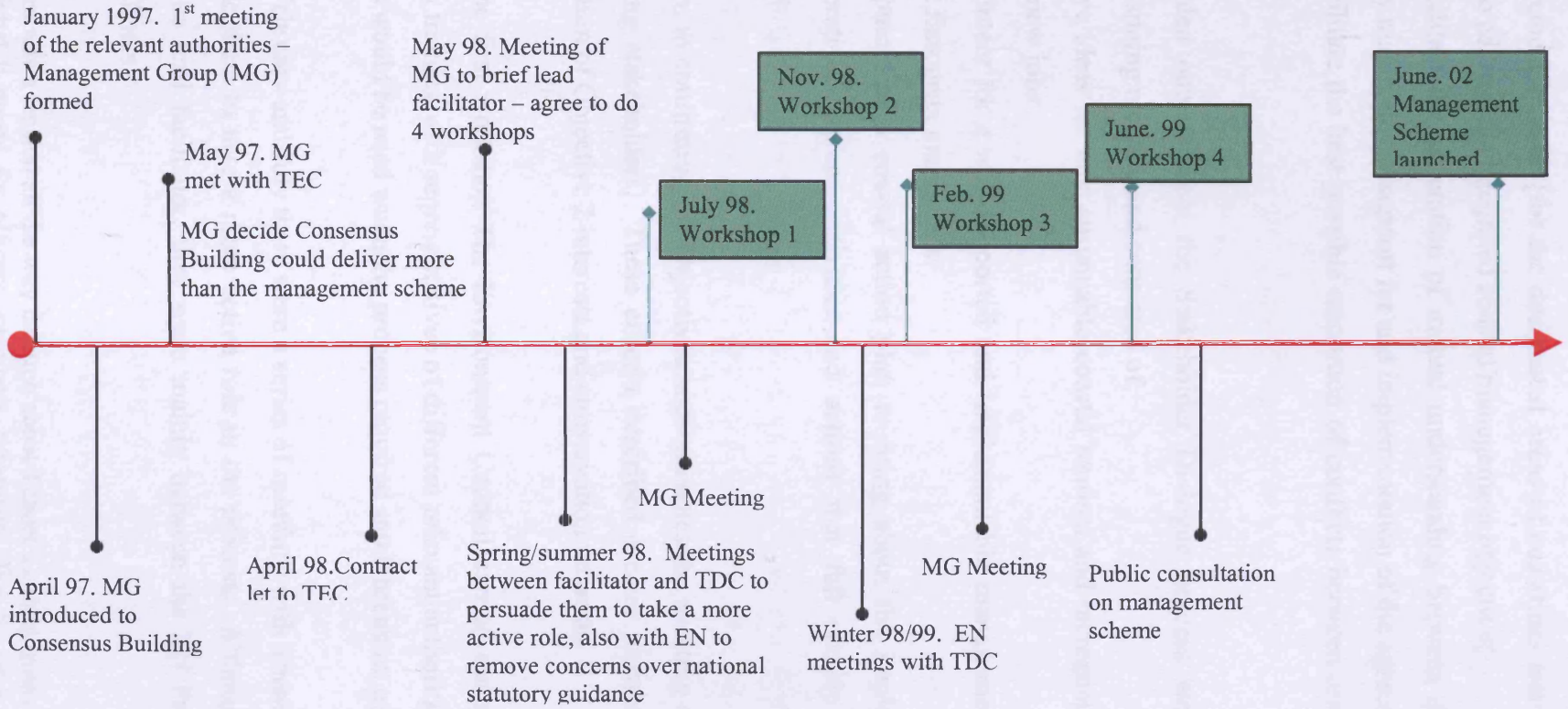
The following section offers a detailed description of the Stakeholder Dialogue process that occurred between April 1998 and June 2001. In providing a step-by-step description of context this chapter emphasises the complex and dynamic environment the Stakeholder Dialogue process operated within. Such an environment demands a responsive process of participation; can this demand for a reactive process be met by an approach that emphasises deliberation and inclusion? This tension presents a potential challenge for effective participatory decision-making that the following description and subsequent analysis may throw some light on.

This retrospective description of process draws on a number of data sources. In particular, photo-reports from each of the participatory workshops offer an accurate and honest description of both the process design and the issues raised. These reports are supported by the two earlier reviews by Pound (1999) and Jones *et al.* (2001). Interviews with participants and the lead facilitator provide an additional source of information. Figure 6.1 provides a timeline describing the key stages in the production of the management scheme for the Thanet coast.

The contract with The Environment Council was let in April 1998 and between then and the first workshop in July 1998 there was an intensive process of planning and preparation. On the 8th April The Environment Council facilitated the first planning meeting amongst the management group. A copy of the photo report from this meeting is provided in Appendix G. The meeting was used to bring the lead facilitator up to speed with the Thanet area and some of the existing issues. In particular the concerns of Thanet District Council were highlighted, as was the importance of achieving a "balance between management scheme and Objective 2 requirements" (sheet 5 (am) Photo report 8th April 1998). The meeting also raised the issue of "Thanet Apathy" (sheet 1 (pm)), and the recognition that "Thanet DC need to see that they will get something out of this in order to get them involved" (sheet 1 (pm)). It was at this meeting that the blue print for the participatory process was set out and objectives and outputs were confirmed. It is worth highlighting that the stakeholders involved at this stage were all from relevant authorities; they represent only a small minority of the 106 individuals who were involved during the four main workshops. A clear statement of objectives and intended outputs is set out in the information for tenders provided by English Nature (a copy of this is provided in Appendix H). The objectives were as follows:

- To assist the participants in generating mutually acceptable solutions to tackle the issues identified.
- To provide the forum for creative thinking to generate ideas for new sustainable coastal tourism and recreation initiatives which can be taken forward and lead to new jobs.

Fig. 6.1 Production of the Thanet European marine site management scheme



- To facilitate the generation of mutually acceptable wording for the main management scheme [for the designated areas of coastline] and the coastal action plan [to address the integrated coastal management objective].
- To facilitate the generation of mutual understanding between different users and thereby maximise the support for and implementation of the agreed actions.
- To facilitate the best possible resolution of conflicts between different users of the site.

The intended outputs from the Stakeholder Dialogue process were agreed at this original planning meeting and consisted of:

- Creative ideas for new sustainable coastal tourism and recreation initiatives which create new jobs
- The content for a well-supported and implementable management scheme for the Thanet European marine site.
- The content of a coastal action plan to bring about the implementation of the collaboratively agreed activities and actions that fall outside the management scheme.

In addition, to confirming the objectives and outcomes the meeting set out the criteria for selecting stakeholders. These criteria described a clear intention to balance the representation of Objective 2 interests and conservation interests.

Prior to the first workshop The Environment Council carried out some introductory facilitation training with representatives of different relevant authorities. These support facilitators would be used when the process required small breakout groups.

Between February and July there were a series of meetings with Thanet District Council to persuade them to take a more active role in the process. Although these meetings involved the lead facilitator, they were mainly between the EN Project Officer and Council officers.

> "There was a tension all the way through about Thanet's commitment to all this lot and what it meant for officers, members, whatever. For us, as a management group, it was a very important and constant issue and certainly was an issue between Diana [EN Project Officer] and myself all the way through the process,

> and a lot of hard work had to go into bringing Thanet on board properly." (Lead facilitator)

Initially these meetings had only limited success because "the officers from Thanet were under formal instructions to be there as observers" (Lead facilitator pers. com. 28/11/02). Although the institutional support was lacking, those officers that did attend the participatory workshops contributed and played an active role. This raises an interesting contextual feature regarding representation. Despite the fact that Thanet District Council's commitment to the designation and Stakeholder Dialogue remained somewhat limited, their participating representatives enjoyed an active role in each of the workshops.

> "I'd want to think that we gave as much as we could into the process, I think we wanted to fully participate despite the concerns we had and I think we probably did that." (TDC Planning Officer).

Alongside the discussions with Thanet District Council the preparation for the first workshop was characterised by a tension within English Nature regarding the timing and use of Stakeholder Dialogue. Three weeks prior to the first workshop the English Nature maritime team,[41] based in Peterborough, announced the timeline for delivering the conservation objectives (Regulation 33 Advice) for each marine SAC. It was expected that this statement of ecological goals would be delivered in 2000 and that it should be used to inform the development of any management scheme. Effectively the maritime team instructed the English Nature Thanet Project Officer to postpone the Stakeholder Dialogue process for up to 2 years.

> "Oh and then there was this other one [debate] that took place over the Reg 33 package which is where I was told I can't go forward until you've got your Reg 33 package done and dusted with. I was told that and they were trying to make me pull the whole process, and so Jeff [the lead facilitator] said, 'well I'm going to pull out of this whole process because....you might be in good faith but I understand the people behind you aren't'." (English Nature Project Officer 7/10/02)

The English Nature Project Officer rejected the idea that a scientific statement of objectives was required before the management scheme could be developed, arguing instead that "the stakeholders only need to know in simple terms what is important"

[41] This is the national team within English Nature with a special remit to cover marine issues, including the establishment of Marine SAC sites .

(Pound 1999:32). She felt that putting off the workshops at the last minute would "generate bad feeling and suspicion", in effect undermining the preparation she had put in with local relevant authorities. This tension highlighted a real gap in understanding and commitment between the head office of English Nature and local Project Officer charged with delivery. The Stakeholder Dialogue process was only allowed to continue after The Environment Council met with English Nature staff and assured them that the process would not undermine EN's statutory responsibility to produce the Regulation 33 package and that the Management scheme would be consistent with aims of the designation. However, as with the commitment of Thanet District Council this tension describes an important feature of context that the Stakeholder Dialogue process must acknowledge if it is to be effective.

On the 4th June 1998 an invitation letter and supporting material was sent out to 126 individuals. These stakeholders had all been identified by the management group as having an interest in the planned discussions for the forthcoming workshops. A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix I. It is important to note that the letter gives equal emphasis to the goals of nature conservation and economic regeneration. Although this is supported by background information, and the title 'Thanet Coast –An asset for all', the majority of additional information provided relates to conservation and the new coastal designation.

Workshop 1

Of the 126 invited, 40 stakeholders attended the first workshop on 18th July 1998. Table 6.1 below offers a comparison between the numbers invited and those that attended each of the workshops. Each participant brought with them five post-it notes as part of a visioning exercise. They were asked to respond to the question: it is now 2020 what is it that makes Thanet Coast a great place to live? Individuals grouped like with like answers in an activity that was designed to start the process with a positive feel. The majority of the day was spent in small group discussions, the first session asked what changes were necessary to get to the vision described by the post-it notes. The second session asked participants to complete a matrix designed to identify possible conflicts between human activities and nature conservation interests. In both sessions the work was carried out in heterogeneous interests groups, as apposed to homogenous groups made up of the same or similar interests. In addition to these small group sessions that emphasised deliberation and active participation, there was a presentation on legislative requirements and planning and regeneration concerns. The workshop ended by asking the stakeholders to identify their information needs, this produced a total of 200 questions.

Between the first and second workshop every attempt was made to answer the 200 questions the first workshop produced. These answers were collated and sent out to all stakeholders. A photo-report record of the day was also sent to each participant. The management group met to review the process and consider the next stages. The EN Project Officer says that the group did not make any decisions over the content of the plan "except as stakeholders within the main process" (Pound 1999:19).

Before the third workshop a number of meetings were held with TDC in an attempt to clarify interdepartmental aspirations for a coastal action plan and to reinforce the need for senior level participation. The English Nature Project Officer produced a 'mock up' of the conservation management scheme. This was purposefully presented as a work in process intended to encourage comments and discussion.

The third workshop generated two important discussion points. It was at this meeting that Thanet District Council came on board and the idea of a Coastal Park was suggested. It was also during this workshop that the proposal for management through codes of conduct emerged. There is some ambiguity surrounding both of these suggestions and how they gained prominence within the process and eventual outputs.

Workshop 2

On the 4th of November 55 stakeholders attended the second workshop, again 126 people had been invited. On arrival the participants were asked to indicate on a map where they thought different activities occurred along the coastline. The morning was spent brainstorming new ideas for using the coast and improvements to the area. This broad remit generated over 300 ideas. Staying in small groups the participants were the asked to prioritise, whilst bearing in mind the principles given to them at the start of the day, ideas should be; environmentally sensitive, help the local community and enhance the local economy. Staying in small groups participants were introduced to examples from existing policy statements from elsewhere and asked to comment on them. This introduced stakeholders to the likely language and content of the management scheme and coastal action plan. The final activity for the workshop asked five different groups to focus on five different themes. One group tested the ideas generated in the morning against the principles, another considered how, where, and when there might be user/user conflict along the coast, a third group tested current activities against conservation objectives whilst a fourth and fifth tested the new ideas against the conservation objectives and regeneration objectives respectfully. Both conservation and regeneration objectives were provided by the management group.

Workshop 3

On the 10th February 1999 51 stakeholders participated in the 3rd workshop. As with the previous workshops, participants worked in small groups made up of representatives from a range of different interests. The first activity involved testing the 300+ ideas generated earlier against firstly the regeneration criteria, then the conservation criteria and finally with existing users. Each group was given a sub set of the total 300 ideas. The second activity involved reviewing the draft management scheme and coastal action plan. Participants were asked to comment on the headings used, whether the proposals were suitable, what would constitute good guidelines for a code of conduct and anything else they noted such as style and 'pitch'. In a later stage the participants were asked to comment on the accuracy of the GIS maps and to discuss plans for the final workshop and beyond. In particular participants were asked if they knew of any interests groups that had been omitted and how to ensure comprehensive consultation on the draft Management scheme.

The English Nature Project Officer speaks of the exciting moment when the Director of Planning from Thanet District Council apparently recognised the potential within the discussions and ideas from the workshops and saw how the Council could market them under the banner of a Coastal Park.

> "It was in the middle of workshop 3 when we got this chap [Director of Planning] to come along, he was kind of sceptical about the whole process as well, ...at coffee time he met me and said, 'well this is all very interesting, its all very buzzy and happening isn't it but I'm not going to be staying beyond lunch time'. Then at lunch time.... he came up to be and said 'we really must talk, we must talk' we went off to a corner table and sat there and he was saying if all these great ideas and all this stuff could be packaged together under the kind of overarching theme of a Marine Park, as a kind of marketing tool, an integrating tool all the rest of it, we going to get right behind of you. Damascus Road time." (EN Project Officer)

It is interesting to note that this dialogue/discussion referred to by the Project Officer occurred outside of the facilitated Stakeholder Dialogue and as a result is neither recorded in the photo report nor recognised by many stakeholders.

The Director of Planning at Thanet District Council suggests that rather than being a product of the participatory process the Marine Park idea was actually strategically introduced by the Council in order that they might gain support for the idea. When asked whether he thought the outputs differed from what he might have expected from a traditional consultation process he said:

> "I have to say we drip fed certain things into the discussion, certain things we wanted to see come out of it without making people too aware that we were actually doing that and one or two things that did come out of it, for example this idea of a coastal zone came out because we drip fed it into the discussion."

Amongst those stakeholders who were not from relevant authorities there was also some confusion regarding the origins of the coastal park suggestion and what the term meant. For instance the LA21 Officer said:

> "Then of course I don't know at what stage it was but some bright spark came up with the idea of it being a Coastal Park, and then of course they were more or less trapped...TDC of course, into the concept and they had to take it away and talk about it." (LA21 officer)

Another stakeholder from a local residents association was equally unsure as to where the suggestion had come from, or what it actually meant. She said:

> "yes, I'm a bit vague about the marine park, I don't really know what they meant about that." (Local Residents Association representative)

The third workshop also introduced the idea of implementing the management scheme through codes of conduct. It is unclear as to what extent this suggestion arose from within participatory process. The photo-report from the third workshop suggests the management group presented the idea to the stakeholders. (Supporting Handout in workshop 3 photo-report, see Appendix J). Certainly some stakeholders were unsure as to where the idea came from, for instance one participant said:

> "it was a bit vague the codes of conduct thing. I think we had only one short session talking about it, where we had to give our opinions and there were lots of opinions given." (Foreness Water Ski Club representative)

Throughout the Stakeholder Dialogue process techniques were used to ensure participants contributed, were heard and their suggestions recorded in a transparent manner. Use of Post-it notes, sticky dots and tick box matrixes all helped to maintain an equal opportunity for participant input.

Workshop 4

The fourth and final workshop occurred on the 7th June 1999 and was attended by 65 participants. The day was divided into two, the morning session concentrated on reviewing the management scheme whilst the afternoon started work on the Marine Park project. In the morning session participants were given the opportunity to form their own groups, this resulted in similar interest groups as opposed to the diverse groups from earlier workshops. Each group commented on the latest draft of the management scheme. Following this the groups discussed the proposed codes of conduct. A third exercise presented each group with an evaluation matrix in which they could indicate their support for the management scheme, the matrix included space for comments on what was needed to increase their support. The afternoon focused on reviewing suggestions that had arisen through the course of the process that might fit under a Marine Park banner, and attempting to establish a timeline for action. The final session of the day consisted of two exercises designed to evaluate the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. Participants were asked to record on Post-it notes what they thought had been the strengths and weaknesses of the participatory process. Secondly, participants were asked to record on a sliding scale the extent to which they felt their involvement had made a difference to the management scheme and coastal action plan. (see appendix L for a copy of this).

The fourth workshop did not mark the production of the final management scheme. A consultation period followed the completion of the formalised draft management scheme. This traditional consultation process highlighted a lack of understanding and commitment to the Stakeholder Dialogue process from within the English Nature maritime team. At no stage during the participatory development of the management scheme was any contribution made on behalf of the maritime team. However, the call for comments on the draft management scheme led to a detailed and extensive response. This reply to the call for comments threatened to undermine the relationships the EN Project Officer had developed with local stakeholders and relevant authorities. The Project Officer said that:

> "there were some difficulties around that, Maritime saved up a lot of their detailed comments right to the end. I had to .... negotiate with them....some of their comments meant I had to reopen negotiations over bits of text with some of the other relevant authorities. These were really 11th hour, literally a week before it was meant to go to print.....there's a huge bit of learning there for EN nature about if you participate, you don't at one point act like a participant and then kind of act like you've got a veto on the whole thing at the end." (EN Project Officer)

Box 6.3 Summary Box

Throughout the participatory process a number of potentially influential tensions emerged. These are particularly clear in relation to the role and commitment of the two key relevant authorities. Thanet District Council showed a reluctance to commit to the process until the 3rd workshop. The local English Nature Project Officer drove the process forward despite both a lack of support and understanding from the EN maritime team and apparent tension between the local and national office regarding responsibilities for line management. The English Nature Project Officer is credited by a number of stakeholders as sustaining the process with her commitment to the participatory approach.

The management scheme was eventually launched on 27th June 2001. Sixty-eight stakeholders accepted an invitation to what was referred to as a 'celebration event' (Invitation letter 25/05/01). The day emphasised the collective approach used to develop the management scheme and included participatory activities designed to involve people in the launch. The delay between the final workshop on the 7th June and the launch 12 months later was largely due to the EN Project Officer being on sick leave. In her absence, the process of producing the management scheme lost its main driving force and as a result the momentum that had been built up over the past two years slowly dissipated.

Table 6.1: Summary of participant numbers attending each of the workshops.

	No Invited	No attending	% of total invited
Workshop 1 July 1998	126	40	31%
Workshop 2 October 1998	126	55	44%
Workshop 3 January 1999	126	51	40%
Workshop 4 June 1999	110	65	59%
Total number of different people who attended at least once		103	82%

6.4 Evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet

6.4.1 Methods of Data Collection

The contextual description of the Thanet case set out above provides a first step in the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue. The description and justification of the fieldwork methods that follows is a response to this context, and the evaluation strategy provided by Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 argued that the challenges of participation evaluation are best met through a qualitative methodology that allows participants to present their understandings and impressions of the participatory event and its outcomes. The application of qualitative methods is supported by Oakley (1999) in his discussion of evaluation and participatory processes. He describes five features of qualitative assessment that argue for its application in the evaluation of participatory processes. These are:

1. It is naturalistic - there is no attempt to manipulate the program for the purpose of the evaluation.
2. It is heuristic - the approach allows continuous redefinition as our understanding of the project increases.
3. It is holistic - the evaluation sees the program as a working whole.
4. It is inductive - the evaluator seeks to understand the outcome of a development without imposing predetermined expectations.
5. It ensures close and continuous contact with the participants of the program in their own environment.

The following discussion introduces the three qualitative methods of data collection adopted by this evaluation[42]. These are in-depth, semi structured interviews, participant observation and a literature review.

[42] Taken together they offer the necessary means of triangulation to ensure the evaluation generates both a valid and comprehensive set of data.

6.4.2 Interviews

Given that the in-depth, semi-structured interview "is probably the most commonly used qualitative technique" (Kitchin & Tate 2000:213) it is not surprising it offers the most appropriate qualitative method of data collection for this evaluation. A semi-structured interview will enable both an open dialogue and the opportunity for the evaluator to cover certain issues, this way allowing the interviewee to introduce new ideas and issues not previously considered, while also ensuring that in each case similar questions relating to the overall objectives are asked. In permitting this the interview method engages with the goal free evaluation and the impact assessment.

The fieldwork in the Thanet evaluation describes a responsive and iterative process of data collection. The mechanics of the fieldwork and in particular the interview schedule and interviewee selection, drew on the responses from earlier scoping interviews in order to maintain the accuracy and relevance of the evaluation. Using the archive folder from The Environment Council and discussions with the lead facilitator, three key stakeholders were identified for initial scoping interviews. The aim of the scoping interview was to establish a clear understanding of the objectives of the Stakeholder Dialogue process while also providing the evaluation with the opportunity to gather background information and pilot the in-depth, semi-structured interview method. The first of these three interviews occurred on the 1st August 2001 with the English Nature Project Officer. This meeting confirmed the original selection of the remaining two scoping interviewees and on the 30th August I met with the Director of Tourism and Leisure at Thanet District Council and later on in the day with the LA21 Officer. These interviews not only allowed the evaluation to identify the commonly understood objectives but to also explore any variation in understanding between different organisations and sectors. It was necessary for the evaluation to have a clear understanding of the stated goals in order to ensure a focussed impact assessment.

The first interview with the English Nature Project Officer provided an extensive set of supporting literature. Included within this was a complete register detailing who participated at which workshop and whom they were representing. This data set formed the basis on which the interview selection was made. Identifying stakeholders for

evaluation interviews involved applying a set of selection criteria to the list of 100+ that attended at least one workshop. The criteria set out below reflected the claims of Stakeholder Dialogue and the requirements of evaluation research.

1. Stakeholder Dialogue's principles of inclusion, equality and the win/win position made it important to ensure the evaluation met as many participants as was feasible from each of the various sectors represented in the process.
2. The need for the evaluation to be recognised as a fair assessment of effectiveness required the fieldwork to focus on those participants who had been present at all four workshops. However, the evaluation recognises that an assessment would be incomplete if it failed to identify the reasons behind short-term participation. With this in mind the fieldwork involved a number of participants who attended only three, two and one workshops.
3. The statutory responsibilities of the relevant authorities meant representatives from each were initially selected.
4. The interview selection process identified those participants who were either required to take action by the management scheme or whose activities are impacted upon by the scheme.

While these criteria described a provisional list of interviewees, the final selection of stakeholders who participated in the evaluation developed throughout the process. At each interview stakeholders were asked if they felt there was anybody in particular I ought to speak to, in this way the evaluation developed in response to the experiences of the participants.

Table 6.2 Interviewed Stakeholders

This table provides a record of the stakeholders interviewed as part of the Thanet evaluation. The organisation or interest they represented is recorded, as is the number of workshops they attended, the date of the interview and the number of times they were interviewed. A total of 34 interviews were conducted.

No	Name	No of interviews	No of workshops attended	Organisation	Date of meeting
1	John Morgan	1	2	Environment Agency	12/11/01
2	Trevor Heron	1	2	Director of Planning TDC	3/12/01
3	Peter Miller	2	2	Director of Tourism & Leisure TDC	30/08/01 6/12/01
4	Adrian Verrall	1	3	Planning Officer TDC	7/12/01
5	Andrew Jones	1	4	Kent County Council Countryside Officer	5/12/01
6	Nick Delaney	1	3	Dover District Council Countryside Officer	6/12/01
7	Diana Pound	3 (+ numerous phone conversations)	4	English Nature	1/08/01 13/11/01 17/10/02
8	Vera Elliot	2	4	LA21	30/08/01 14/11/01
9	Muriel Arnett	1	4	Cliffs End Resident Association	16/01/02

10	Pete Forrest	1	4	Kent Wildlife Trust	16/11/01
11	Irene Critchley	1	3	Margate Hoteliers Association	14/11/01
12	Denys Tweddell	1	4	Royal Temple Yacht Club	15/11/01
13	Jim Moran	1	4	Kent Land-Sailing Club	3/12/01
14	Toni Andrews	1	4	Foreness Water Ski Club	13/11/01
15	Ron Mason	1	3	Thanet Fishermen's Association	4/12/01
16	Councillor Gore	1	4	Thanet District Council	5/12/01
17	Albert Battery +1	1	4	Ramsgate and Broadstairs Society	21/01/02
18	Cllr Beale	1	3	Broadstairs and St. Peters Town Council	6/02/02
19	Eilleen Randall	1	4	Chair Pegwell & District Association	6/06/02
20	Dr David Cooper	1	4	Council for the Protection of Rural England	17/01/02
21	Richard Noble	1	3	Broadstairs Sailing Club	23/05/02
22	John Oki	1	4	Thanet Sports Council and Sub Aqua Club	5/6/02
23	Dr Joseph Gaugas	1	2	Foreness Point Action Group	17/01/02

24	Suzanah Peckham	1	N/A (not in post)	English Nature	7/10/02
25	Tony Child	2 (+ Phone conversations)	4	Marine Park Project Officer	30/08/01 25/09/02
26	Jeff Bishop	1	4	Facilitator	28/11/02
27	John Rowland	1	4	Foreness Point Action Group, LA21, Councillor.	17/01/02
28	Alasdair Bruce	1	4	Local geologist	18/01/02
Phone Interviews					
29	Mr Berry	1	1	Bait Digger	13/05/02
30	Mr Tapp	1	1	Farmer	14/05/02
Written Response					
31	Dr Pearce	N/A	4	Thanet Waste Reduction and Resourcefulness Group	N/A

6.4.2.1 The Interview schedule and program

The interview schedules were designed in order to give the interviewees the opportunity to offer examples of how they experienced the benefits of participatory decision-making introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. Each schedule followed the same basic pyramid pattern, (Dunn 2000) starting with open background questions designed to gain the confidence of the interviewee and to gather important contextual information. The schedule then suggested a set of general open questions intended to allow the stakeholder to present their own thoughts. Following this the schedule asks a series of questions focused on the substantive goals of the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The schedule concludes with a set of questions built around the intangible goals of Stakeholder Dialogue. By this stage in the interview the stakeholder is more likely to be able to recall features of the process and to be comfortable talking about what are often-elusive themes, such as learning, trust and communication. An example of an

interview schedule and the criteria table it was built around are provided in Appendix K. Throughout the interviews I attempted to maintain what Fontana & Frey (1994:361) refer to as a "balanced rapport" with the interviewees. While I maintained a friendly and engaging style of 'interested listening' I took care not to pre-empt interviewees' answers.

On average, each interview was approximately one hour long, although they ranged from thirty-five minutes to over three hours. In some case participants were interviewed more than once. For example the English Nature Project Officer was interviewed three times, once during the scoping process, as a representative of English Nature for the evaluation, and finally in a follow up interview. Two participants who had been involved in only one workshop were interviewed over the phone and one stakeholder offered to reply in writing to a set of questions rather then be interviewed. The evaluation did contact those participants who had only attended one workshop, as well as twelve stakeholders who had been invited to the first three workshops but had chosen not to attend. Only two stakeholders responded to this request, in both cases they had attended the first workshop and had then taken no further part in the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The evaluation sought to identify the reasons for their limited participation and provide them with an opportunity to describe any benefits they experienced as a result of their involvement.

Three follow up interviews were carried out in September 2002 with the Thanet Coast Project Officer, the outgoing English Nature Project Officer and the new English Nature Conservation Officer with responsibility for Thanet and the European marine site. These interviews allowed the evaluation to establish measures of change, commitment and transferability, whilst also providing the evaluation with the chance to clarify areas of uncertainty and gather new data. The appointment of a new English Nature officer with responsibility for Thanet provided an interesting opportunity for the evaluation to establish some measure of transferability, in particular with regard to the improved relationship between English Nature and Thanet District Council as described by the outgoing Project Officer. The follow up interview was a chance to see if this new relationship extended beyond the particular Project Officer to include English Nature and its representatives more generally. All face-to-face interviews and phone interviews were recorded.

Once the in-depth interviews and participant observation exercises had been completed the evaluation returned to the lead facilitator. This interview provided the evaluation with an opportunity to confirm features of process, discuss the role of the facilitator and review the design process. For instance this was a chance to identify the level of contextual understanding behind the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops and to determine the extent to which the facilitation team balanced the tension between content and process.

6.4.3 Participant Observation

While in-depth interviews made up the bulk of the fieldwork the evaluation was supported by the use of participant observation methods at four stakeholder meetings aimed at establishing the codes of conduct for different coastal user groups. This approach ensured the evaluation engaged with the process of implementing the management scheme. An earlier review by Jones (1999) highlighted the test that developing these codes posed for both the management scheme and the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

> "A critical issue for the future will be whether the stakeholders are satisfied that the Management scheme incorporates the findings of the workshops and whether their wider constituency will work positively in both the drafting and complying with the activity specific codes of conduct." (Jones 1999:6)

The codes of conduct were developed in small participatory workshops between November 2001 and April 2001. Each workshop involved representatives from relevant interest groups. For instance, the water-users workshop included stakeholders from the water ski club and sailing clubs. Although these workshops were intended to be participatory they were not run by The Environment Council but by the newly appointed Thanet Coast Project Officer. In total five workshops were organised and nine codes of conduct produced. I carried out participant observation at three of the five workshops; water users, dog walking and shore angling. I also attended the stakeholders' update meeting on 24th June 2003. Stakeholders from the original four workshops were invited to hear how the management scheme was being progressed and were given an opportunity to input their own suggestions and ask questions of the

relevant authority representatives. Although the participant observation at each of these meeting was guided by the same criteria that shaped the interview schedule, the approach was sufficiently 'open' to be able to identify any new themes to emerge from the comments and behaviour of the various participants. Following the organisation of participant observation suggested by Kitchin & Tate (2000) I adopted a position of straight participation. I was identified and introduced to stakeholders participating in the workshops but I played no active part. Instead I recorded those comments that referred to the implementation of the management scheme, participants' awareness of both the scheme and the original workshops and their comments regarding other stakeholder groups. In addition to this I noted down the number of stakeholders present and the interests they represented. The Thanet Coast Project Officer provided the participant observation process with all the background information to the codes of conduct meetings.

6.4.4 Literature

In addition to this collection of primary data, a literature search presented a source of secondary evaluation data. A literature review identified not only published documents such as the management scheme and newsletters but also personal responses to the participatory process such as letters from participants and correspondence in the local papers. This literature represents a valuable set of data that offers the evaluation a number of opportunities. At one level it allows an objective comparison between a participant's contribution and the content of the management scheme and the proposed coastal action plan. At the same time, newspaper articles and letters provide a means of assessing the process of implementation and commitment and awareness amongst the wider Thanet community. Background material, such as the information for tenders, the Objective 2 funding report and Management Group minutes allow an insight into the processes behind the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

6.4.5 Analysis

This evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue sought to "understand the inter-relations of multiple versions of reality" (Cook & Crang 1995:72) through a detailed, iterative and

reflexive approach to analysis. The aim of this process was to identify the results of the evaluation by describing the categories and connections between the data (Kitchin & Tate 2000:230). These three stages of description, classification and connecting form the core of the interpretative analysis. In order to facilitate this process I used the computer software package Atlas ti. (Muhr 1997) to analyse each of the transcripts from the thirty four interviews. Atlas ti provides a systematic tool that allows the researcher to assign codes to segments of text; these codes can then be grouped, annotated and linked together to develop lines of argument. In order to make full use of the software each of the interview tapes was transcribed. Field notes made immediately after each interview supported these transcriptions. Together this process produced a significant amount of data that spanned some 500+ pages of text. Atlas ti. provided an effective means of sorting and retrieving quotations from this data set.

Although the use of this computer package greatly supports the process of analysis, it does not remove the need to make challenging decisions regarding the analytical strategy and in particular the approach to coding. The evaluation focus of this thesis immediately provides the coding process with a set of etic codes based on the evaluation criteria used to structure the interviews. However, to only adopt these codes as the basis of the classification process would deny the evaluation the opportunity to identify possible explanations for any products they described. To go the other way and establish purely emic codes describing the participants worlds would be naïve as it is "virtually impossible for the researcher to banish all" their prior thoughts from the analysis (Cook & Crang 1995:67). Recognising this I adopted an 'informed grounded' approach to coding that sought to categorise all of the comments made by interviewees while considering the aims of the thesis. This was an iterative process that saw codes form and merge as the analysis progressed. In total an initial set of some 150 codes was produced. This set of codes was explored and reduced to the set described in the code table provided in Appendix L. This process involved relating the emic codes to the criteria based codes suggested by the evaluation strategy and organising them according to how they related to either the substantive or transformative goals of the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. At the same time codes were organised according to the stakeholder group they came from. As the coding process evolved, the codes were eventually sorted according to whether they referred to before, during or after the

process. This 'paper trail' of codes was then used as the basis to identify the explanatory links that explain the products and experiences of the participants.

The identification of relationships between codes or themes is a product of a process of immersion in the set of quotations that make up the analysed data set. The foundations of these relationships are identified during the coding process, in particular through the active use of the memo facility in Atlas ti. This allows the researcher to record and attach long textual comments to certain codes or quotations. The commentary provided by the memo tool is supported by the network facility that allows the researcher to map relationships between codes, quotes and memos. The following chapter describes how the process of identifying relationships reveals the results of the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet.

Chapter 7
The Principal Case Study Part II:
Tracing the development of Stakeholder Dialogue products

Introduction

The process of analysis revealed not only a comprehensive picture of effectiveness but also how a complex web of relationships and interests interact to determine the products of Stakeholder Dialogue. The following chapter maps a route through this complexity, describing the different products participants identify and how these outputs can be shown to evolve out of the interwoven relationship between context and participatory process.

The chapter is organised according to the central theme to emerge from the analysis of Thanet data: that the participatory process cannot be considered in isolation. In order to attach meaning and explanation to the outcomes it is necessary to map the transition all the way from the original invitation to participate to the current process of implementation.[43] Building on this theme the chapter is structured into three sections that separate the results according to the stage of the Stakeholder Dialogue process they refer to. Each section is built around an Influence Diagram, which is a schematic means of representing the complex web of explanatory linkages behind the results. The first section explores the expectations, hopes and reasons for participation that stakeholders bring to the participatory process. The second section draws on the comments stakeholders made about the participatory process and examines the different factors that influence a participant's sense of contribution. The final, third section presents the various different products the stakeholders describe as well as introducing the

[43] The recognition of the interdependence running throughout the results is a product of the open coding process. This would have remained unrecognised using a traditional goal attainment assessment based around etic coding. This grounded approach captured those comments referring to background, interests and expectations that stakeholders brought to the process and, in doing so, uncovered the explanatory root for the products that different stakeholders go on to describe.

substantive outputs and the process of their implementation. In particular this section highlights the differences between the comments made by relevant authority participants and those made by the remaining stakeholders. In offering an explanation for this variation the section returns to the themes identified in the first Influence Diagram. Introducing all three of these sections is a fourth Influence Diagram that offers an overview of the key themes running through the results.

The Influence Diagrams make an original contribution to the existing academic debate surrounding stakeholder participation by providing a summary description of the relationships linking the key themes of the results. The variation contained within these links is developed by exploring the quotations of different stakeholders. Quotations are drawn from the coded Atlas *ti.* output and are chosen on the basis of their relevance and the stakeholder interest and background they come from. Where there are sharply contrasting quotes from different stakeholders these are provided as evidence of the often very different interpretations the interviews uncovered. In this way the thesis builds up an explanatory picture of the multiple descriptions of products and outcomes described by stakeholders.

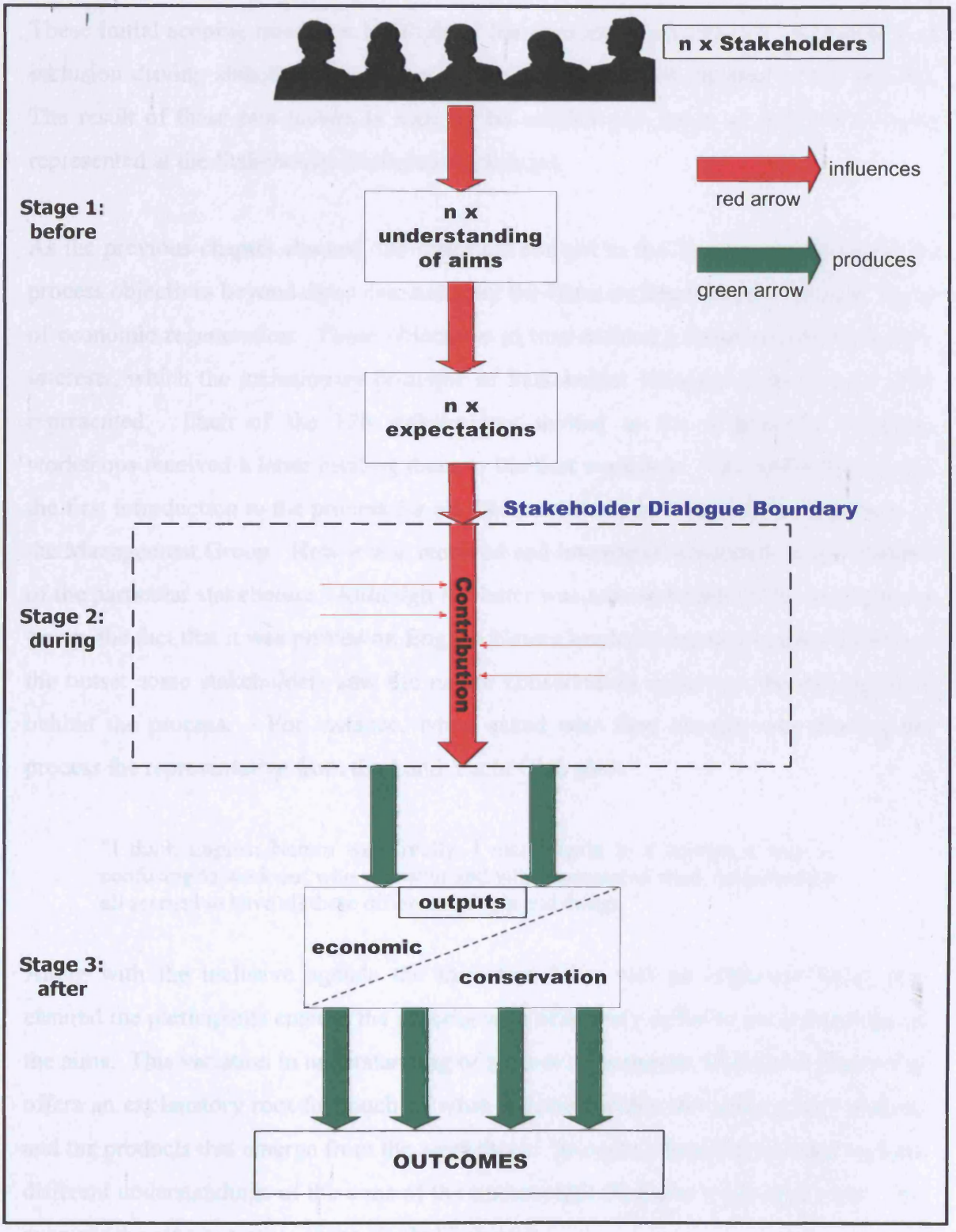
7.1 Overview

The first Influence Diagram (Fig 7.1) introduces the three sections that are explored in greater detail throughout the chapter. The important message from this diagram is that what emerges from the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops is a product of the interaction, conscious or unconscious, between the process and both the immediate context and the social and economic history the process is set against.

7.2 Entering the participatory process

The following discussion is represented by Fig. 7.2. This second Influence Diagram explores the various factors that determine what the stakeholders bring with them to the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops

Fig 7.1 Influence Diagram: tracing the production of Stakeholder Dialogue outputs



7.2.1 Theme: *multiple understandings of aims*

Much of what is described below arose from early interview questions designed to gain some background understanding of the stakeholders and their reasons for participation. These initial scoping questions highlighted the combined influence of the principle of inclusion driving stakeholder selection and of the broad aims adopted by the process. The result of these two factors is seen in the number and range of different interests represented at the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

As the previous chapter showed, the historical context to the Thanet case extended the process objectives beyond those demanded by the Habitats Regulations to include issues of economic regeneration. These objectives in turn defined a broad set of stakeholder interests, which the inclusionary principle of Stakeholder Dialogue ensured were fully represented. Each of the 126 stakeholders invited to the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops received a letter inviting them to the first workshop. This letter represented the first introduction to the process for all those stakeholders who were not members of the Management Group. How it was received and interpreted depended on the interests of the particular stakeholder. Although the letter was sent on behalf of the management group, the fact that it was printed on English Nature headed notepaper ensured that from the outset some stakeholders saw the nature conservation agency as the driving force behind the process. For instance, when asked who they thought was running the process the representative from the Land Yacht Club said:

> "I think English Nature were really, I mean again to a layman it was so confusing to work out who was who and who represented what, because they all seemed to have all these different initials and things."

Along with the inclusive agenda the invitation letter was an important factor that ensured the participants entered the process with often very different understandings of the aims. This variation in understanding of aims is an important foundation theme that offers an explanatory root for much of what followed within the participatory process and the products that emerge from the workshops. In-depth interviews revealed various different understandings of the aims of the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops were. For example the representative of the Yacht Club said:

> "I would have thought it was to look at opportunities for promoting the welfare of the Isle of Thanet, in particular to attract more business, more tourism."

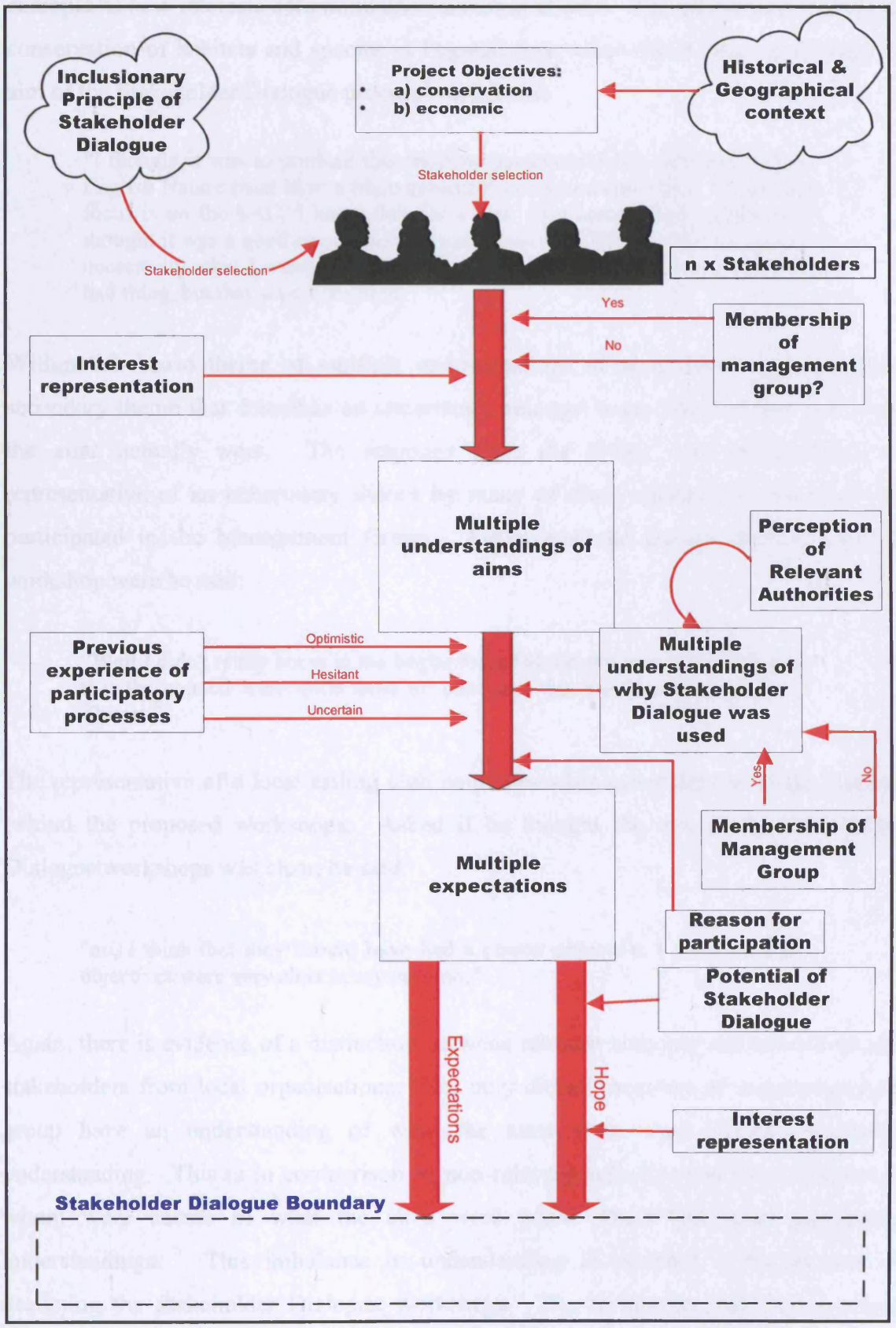
Although this was a common perception amongst some stakeholders, it was not identified as the principal aim by many of the relevant authority representatives who instead emphasised the aim of delivering their responsibilities under the Habitats Directive. One Thanet District Councillor said that:

> "the aim of the workshop was to write the management agreement, that was the end gain..... If people want to believe it was for a better Thanet, let them believe it."

This lack of common understanding is the cumulative result of a number of different factors. Principal among these was the division between those stakeholders who understood the legislative and funding background to the project and those who did not. This difference in knowledge separates two broad groups of stakeholders, those from relevant authorities and those who represented local interest groups. This inequality in understanding is reinforced through membership of the Management Group where the aims are first drawn up.

In addition to this crude division in understanding of aims there are many more subtle variations within the larger group of non-relevant authority participants. This variation often appears to stem from a personalised interpretation of the invitation letter that is reinforced by the fact that participants are invited in recognition of their particular interest. This is shown in the second Influence Diagram (Fig 7.2) by the box titled, Interest Representation. This is the first introduction to a recurring theme throughout the results that relates to the influence of interest representation. Stakeholders invited in recognition of their role as a chairperson, treasurer, president etc of a particular organisation identify and describe aims commensurate with their particular interest.

Fig. 7.2 Influence Diagram: Entering the process



For instance the comments from the warden of Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve offer an example of how interests determine understanding of aims. His interest is primarily the conservation of habitats and species at Pegwell Bay, when asked what he thought the aim of the Stakeholder Dialogue process was he said:

> "I thought it was to produce this baseline document that is required by law. English Nature must have a Management Scheme and that's that. I know the focus is on the SAC, I know that for a fact. But some people might have thought it was a good opportunity to push issues on Thanet. But that wasn't necessarily what I wanted to see, if that came up out of it that would be no bad thing, but that wasn't the issue."

Within this broad theme of multiple understandings of aims there is an important secondary theme that describes an uncertainty amongst some stakeholders as to what the aims actually were. The response from the diving club representative is representative of an uncertainty shared by many of those stakeholders who had not participated in the Management Group. Asked what he thought the aims of the workshop were he said:

> "Well I didn't really know in the beginning what the aim was, but it did seem that the council were quite keen on measures that would attract people to Thanet."

The representative of a local sailing club emphasises his uncertainty as to the purpose behind the proposed workshops. Asked if he thought the aim of the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops was clear, he said:

> "no, I think that they should have had a clearer objective; I don't think the objectives were very clear in my opinion."

Again, there is evidence of a distinction between relevant authority representatives and stakeholders from local organisations. Not only did all members of the management group have an understanding of what the aims were, they shared a *common* understanding. This is in comparison to non-relevant authority participants, some of whom were unsure of what the aims were while others had often contrasting understandings. This imbalance in understanding is mirrored in the process of designing the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. The facilitation team had a sound understanding of the aims as they were described by the relevant authority

representatives but a much poorer appreciation of the variation and uncertainty that lies within the majority of participants.

Box 7.1 Summary Box

Participants entered the Stakeholder Dialogue process with very different ideas as to what the aims of the process were. This variation is a result of differences in knowledge regarding the background to the case coupled with the influence of interest representation and the opportunities for interpretation provided by the broad goals introduced in the invitation letter. The scope for variation in understanding is amplified by the inclusive agenda of Stakeholder Dialogue.

7.2.2 Theme: *Expectations*

The evolution from understanding of aims to expectations is an important relationship that offers an insight into the hidden influences that determines how and why stakeholders choose to participate. The expectations that participants bring to the Stakeholder Dialogue process represent the cumulative effect of a range of different factors. The description below takes each of these in turn and in doing so highlights the pervasive influence of the historical context.

a) The driving influence behind the multiple expectations is the various understandings of aims participants describe. A participant's understanding of the aims or purpose of the participatory workshops will, to a large extent, determine what they expect from the process. Although this relationship would appear to be the most influential in determining expectations it is in turn shaped by a number of additional factors.

b) A key influence in this conversion from aims to expectations is the contrasting reasons different stakeholders gave as to *why* they thought a participatory approach was used[44]. In the majority of cases representatives from relevant authorities recognised it as an attempt to overcome the adversarial culture that had developed between key

[44] This is shown in the Influence Diagram as the box marked 'Why Stakeholder Dialogue was used'. The diagram shows that the different understandings of why Stakeholder Dialogue was used are determined by whether the stakeholder was a member of the management group and by their perception of the different relevant authorities.

organisations, in particular English Nature and Thanet District Council. For instance a Planning Officer from Thanet District Council said:

> "I think what we were trying to achieve was to look at those issues in a slightly less heated conflictual way and look at what solutions we could generate using the knowledge of the people who were there."

However, the fact that many stakeholders were unsure as to why a participatory process was used offers a clear indication that the approach is not a response to demands from local interest groups that they be involved in implementing the Habitats Regulations. Instead, participants are seen as responding to an invitation describing an issue that they perhaps previously knew nothing about. Asked why he thought a participatory approach was used and why he was invited, the land yacht representative replied: "I don't know to be honest." Other non-relevant authority participants provided comments that suggest a cynical perception of why Stakeholder Dialogue was used. For instance the representative of the Council for the Protection of Rural England said:

> "Ah, now we get to the nitty-gritty, why people did it? I think it's a cosmetic exercise. English Nature and TDC want to be seen to be involving local people. I'm convinced that they will do what they wish do to anyway. I think it's a cosmetic exercise."

The representative from the Water Ski Club was equally dismissive of the motivations behind the use of a participatory method, saying:

> "I think somebody's come up with a brilliant idea that it looks good, they also I think have got to, I mean this is English Nature, I think it's a need to justify their jobs in a sort of a way."

It is apparent from a number of interviews that perceptions of local authorities, and to a lesser extent of national agencies, are influential in informing participants' understanding of why it was decided to use Stakeholder Dialogue. A history of raised expectations and missed opportunities has left many participants sceptical of Thanet District Council led initiatives. This is an example of how the historical context is critical in determining how stakeholders approach the opportunity to participate.

c) The analysis highlighted the influence any previous experiences of participatory processes had in determining the different expectations stakeholders described. The

fact that for many participants this was a new experience was influential in determining what they anticipated from the workshops. For some this meant being presented with an opportunity that had long been denied to them. They saw that they were invited in recognition of their interest, to input into a process that would "allow their voices to be heard" (Invitation letter June 1998). As a result their expectations were raised and they entered the process with a sense of optimism. For instance, on receiving his invitation the sailing club representative commented that he:

> "thought the aim of the workshop was to get the local stakeholders.. involved in the decision making process, to have an active part in it."

The large number of participants hides considerable variation in experiences and there were other stakeholders who came with raised expectations on the basis of previous involvement in a participatory process. For instance a local geologist commented that:

> "I had a brief involvement with something similar that was put together for the Dorset coast and that was the first time I had heard of this type of system being used. The impression I came away with was it had the most enormous potential because things weren't being imposed on people, it was a co-opted idea if you like or an ideal, therefore everybody who contributed had a share and more importantly had an onus on them to actually adhere to the codes."

On the other hand some stakeholders who had experienced similar workshops in the past described a degree of hesitancy in their commitment to the approach. Asked what her thoughts were of participatory methods and whether she had been involved in anything similar in the past the Chair of Pegwell and District Association said:

> "I had yes, and a lot of them never seemed to be terribly productive. A lot of talking, a lot of note taking, flip charts and then afterwards lengthy reports; and then it all goes quiet and you don't hear anything else and you think, well what was the point of it all. You do tend to approach these things you know with a degree of suspicion."

Despite the relevant authorities agreeing to use a participatory approach a number of their representatives voiced concerns based on previous experiences of the costs involved and the suitability of the method for producing a conservation document. The Director of Planning at Thanet District Council was concerned with the demands it would place on limited resources, saying that his experience of participatory exercises was:

> "Negative, I suppose in a way. Marginally negative, it's just a matter of the resource that you have to give to them."

The conservation officer from Dover District Council voiced concerns regarding the use of participation methods to deliver a conservation policy. Asked what his opinion was of such methods of decision-making he said:

> "I was dubious, I've been involved in facilitating for Local Agenda 21 at Dover, but I could see value there. I was a bit uncertain that in order to produce a scheme of management which was primarily for nature conservation whether that would be successful. I was a bit concerned there."

For many participants their lack of any previous participation experience meant they were simply unsure of what to expect from their involvement. The different influences of any previous experience of participation are shown in Fig 7.2 by the three arrows labelled *optimistic*, *hesitant* and *uncertain*.

d) The fourth factor to shape the expectations participants bring to the process is their own reasons for participation. Many participants attended the first workshop as a result of their position of responsibility within the organisation they represented; their purpose was simply to report back on what was being discussed. The lack of substantive purpose behind some stakeholders' reasons for participating is a significant factor that the process of designing the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops is largely unaware of. The stakeholder from the Cliffs End Residents Association is one example of a number of local stakeholders whose motivation for participation stemmed from their responsibilities as representative of a group rather than any substantive aim or intention. Asked what she and those she represented hoped to get from participating she said:

> "that's difficult, I don't think we hoped to get anything concrete from it, they just wanted somebody to represent them, to report back to them about what was going on....It was more than anything just a matter of interest."

Among the other participants from non-relevant authority organisations there is some variation in the reasons provided for their involvement in the workshops. In contrast to those participants who offer only vague reasons, some stakeholders describe strong

personal motivations for their participation. The Chair of the Pegwell and District Association said:

> "the main thing I was concerned about was what was happening to the old hover, the future of the old hover site, and that's of great importance to me."

A local geologist welcomed his invitation because he saw it as an opportunity to highlight the geological importance of the coastline; this was his principal reason for participating. He said:

> " Yeah, I'm glad I was invited along if only for the geological point of view, again because I think that is an area that is sorely undervalued within Thanet. So I was very pleased to have the opportunity through the workshops to start banging a little drum and say 'look come on lets do something with this resource'."

An interesting quote from the representative of the Cliffs End Residents Association emphasises both the personal interest that stakeholders bring to the process and, when seen alongside the comment from this same stakeholder at the top of this page, the fact that such motivations are often hidden. When she elaborated on her reason for participating she said:

> "the reason I cottoned on to this is I was interested with anything to do with the coast, I think any discussion on the coast might bring in the hover port site which is my baby. I've been absolutely miserable about the fact that the hover port was ever put there in the first place."

As a representative of her interest group her reasons for participation can be seen as largely passive, being based around ensuring her group is informed and represented. However, her own reasons for participating are much more active, she recognises this as an opportunity to influence the future management of the hover port area.

This theme - reasons for stakeholder participation - highlights another important distinction between relevant authority participants and non-relevant authority stakeholders. Relevant authority participation was clearly driven by a focus on substantive products, either the conservation management scheme or the creation of a coastal action plan that would lead to economic regeneration. Other than the warden of the local nature reserve, none of the local stakeholders identify the production of a

comprehensive coastal management scheme as the reason for their involvement and certainly none of them refer to the Habitats Directive, the Regulations or their implementation. The analysis draws out an important relationship between: the objectives that ultimately defined the design of the Stakeholder Dialogue process, the various reasons stakeholders give for their involvement, and the outcomes they describe at the conclusion. This flow of influence is explored further at a later stage.

Box 7.2 Summary Box

> The above discussion identifies a number of different factors that help to determine the different expectations participants enter the process with. At the heart of this variation are the multiple interpretations of aims described by different participants. Building on this, stakeholders go on to describe very different reasons for *why* they think a participatory process is being used; this is shaped by their perception of the relevant authorities and by the extent of their involvement in the management group. In addition to this, previous experience of similar participatory processes is influential in shaping stakeholder expectations. All these factors combine with the many different reasons stakeholders describe for their participation to generate a complex and often competing set of expectations. The extent of this variation in expectations is largely hidden from the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The process is built around the aims and expectations of those stakeholders within the management group. The interviews highlight the assumptions inherent in this imbalanced approach to design.

7.2.3 Theme: *Hope*

Buried within the comments on expectations and reasons for participation it is possible to identify the different hopes some stakeholders attached to the workshops and their participation. Figure 7.2 illustrates how although the hopes of participants are the product of all the preceding set of influences they are defined by two factors in particular. The first of these is the new opportunity provided by an inclusive participatory process, while the second emphasises the influence of interest representation.

Some stakeholders' comments suggest they are very aware of the opportunity offered by this approach to decision-making. The Director of Tourism and Leisure at Thanet District Council describes how he hopes the inclusive and participatory process will

ensure support for the eventual products. He goes on to describe how he hopes the process will provide him with an opportunity to learn about how conservation and coastal recreation can fit together. In both examples he hopes the process will provide him, and Thanet District Council, with intangible benefits that have been missing from their traditional approach to public decision-making. Asked to describe what he hoped to get from the workshops he identified his hope to build support for any decision:

> "I suppose, from the individual point of view of managing the foreshore, to ensure that what we are trying to do there is a general support for, what I wouldn't want to do is go back to this thing where we say right you do this and you do that, or whatever."

Stakeholders from local interest groups hoped that the participatory process would provide them with an opportunity to contribute their expert knowledge to the decision-making process. The representative from the land yacht sailing club recognised this as an opportunity to influence a decision and hoped he would be given sufficient opportunity to do that. For example he said:

> "What I hoped to gain as a representative of the land sailors and the land yachting club was a chance to use my knowledge and my particular sport to be able to, I wouldn't say defend, but to be able to represent it fully so that people who don't know what it's about can make a qualified decision on it."

The influence of interest representation can be seen in the hopes described by some participants. The participatory process provided stakeholders with an opportunity to introduce their particular concerns into the process in the hope they would secure the action they saw as necessary. Representatives from the Foreness Point Action Group participated in the hope that they would influence the siting of a Southern Water outflow pipe into the sea near Margate. Asked to describe what they hoped to get from the workshops, one member of the Foreness Point Action Group said:

> "well to make our case [about the outflow pipe]. I went there particularly so that we could put the case. We have a very well documented case, we've been involved with it for about 5 years or more, and so you know we felt that it was important that we went out and explained what was happening."

The inclusive approach to decision making ensured a diverse range of hopes among participants. A local geologist described how he hoped the process would lead to a cultural change within the local council:

> "I really hoped that one of the small things that they would get out of that is a better understanding among TDC of what they are actually managing instead of thinking of houses and education issues and unemployment which are all important issues. This coast is important and often underrated in terms of its actual value from a sort of mental point of view."

This comment is representative of the broad and often ambitious hopes some stakeholders brought to the participatory workshops. Encouraged by the language of the invitation letter and the project heading: '*Thanet – An asset for all*' some participants hoped the process would deliver on its objective of promoting the Thanet area. For instance the representative from the water ski club hoped to see real changes and money brought into the area; asked what she hoped to see from the workshops she said:

> "I don't know whether I thought perhaps money would come into the area to improve things that need improving."

7.3 The process of contribution

Hidden among the large number of participating stakeholders, this complex blend of expectations and hopes enters the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops as a latent set of largely unrecognised variation. The fact that Stakeholder Dialogue is largely unaware of this variation is an indication of the bounded nature of the participatory process and the extent of its contextual appreciation. The following results highlight the influence the bounded participatory space plays in determining how participants contribute within Stakeholder Dialogue. The Influence Diagram (Fig 7.3) provides a schematic representation of how the content of Stakeholder Dialogue deliberation is in part shaped by features of the wider context within which the bounded dialogue process occurs. In describing this flow across the Stakeholder Dialogue 'boundary'[45], Fig. 7.3 highlights

[45] The Stakeholder Dialogue boundary is the term used to define the temporal and spatial space the participatory process occurs within. This is a relatively stable construct that is established by the process of designing the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

another set of influences that, like the expectations and hopes that enter the workshops, are not sufficiently addressed in the design or implementation of the workshops.

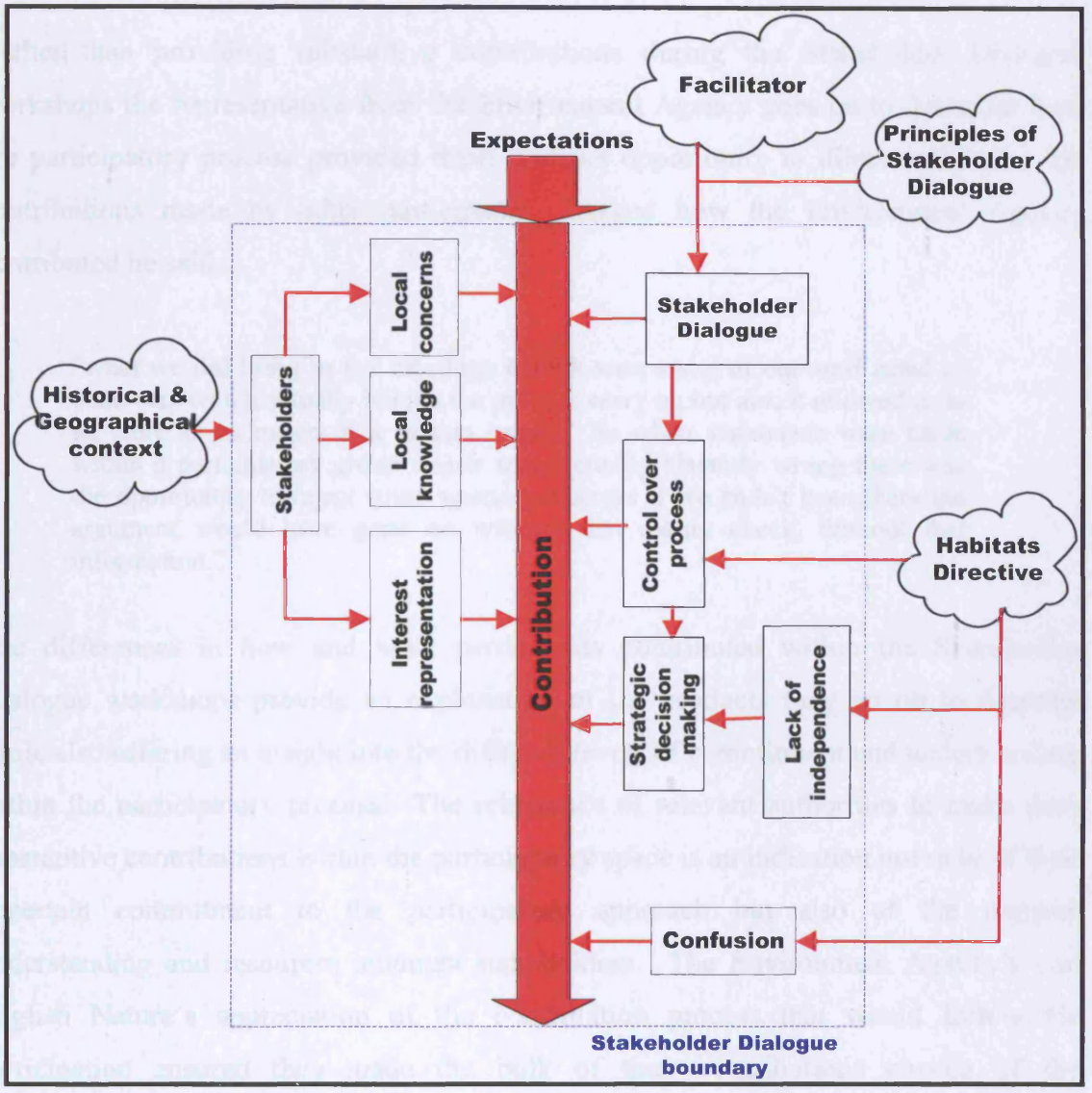
The Influence Diagram is built around the process of contribution[46]. During the analysis of outputs and outcomes, contribution emerged as a critical influence. By exploring the relationships that defined participants' contributions, the discussion that follows provides the explanatory root for the products of Stakeholder Dialogue. Just as the evolution of expectations is a response to a number of different influences, so the process of contribution is defined by a combination of factors. In reviewing these multiple influences the analysis uncovers the recurring distinction between context and process and, in doing so, identifies how these two broad themes combine to offer an explanation for the process of contribution stakeholders describe. The Thanet context provides the raw material for stakeholder contributions while the facilitated Stakeholder Dialogue process serves to manage and direct these contributions. The following Influence Diagram highlights these two sets of influences. The boxes on the left hand side of the contribution arrow refer to the Thanet context; those on the right describe the influence of the Stakeholder Dialogue process.

7.3.1 Stakeholders and context

The open coding analysis uncovered three key themes regarding how and what stakeholders contributed within the participatory workshops. The themes, referred to as: *local knowledge*, *local concerns* and *interest representation*, describe three factors that influence the contribution made by stakeholders. In reviewing these themes and the quotes they contain, a clear distinction emerges between the contributions made by stakeholders from local organisations and interest groups, and those from representatives of relevant authorities.

[46] Contribution is broadly defined as active involvement in the participatory workshops. This includes a broad spectrum of involvement, from writing suggestions on Post-it Notes as instructed by facilitators to leading discussions and shaping the workshop agenda. Importantly, stakeholders vary in their understanding of the level of involvement required to represent a contribution to the process.

Fig. 7.3 Influence Diagram: contribution



Relevant authority contributions reflect their accurate understanding of project objectives and their duty to implement the Habitats Regulations. However, it is clear from some relevant authority representatives that they did not recognise the participatory workshops as their most effective means of contributing. Instead national agencies such as English Nature and the Environment Agency saved the greater part of their comments for the traditional consultation period that followed the workshops. Evidence of this is provided by the representative from the Environment Agency who said:

> "at the end of the day, as a government agency we do tend, we are more used to getting involved in consultation processes,.....in fact I think probably the agency did a lot of its work in commenting on the drafts [of the European marine site Management Scheme] and correcting work on the drafts."

Rather than providing substantive contributions during the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops the representative from the Environment Agency goes on to describes how the participatory process provided them with an opportunity to direct and refine the contributions made by other participants. Asked how the Environment Agency contributed he said:

> "what we did bring to the meetings I think was, some of our staff acted as observers which actually helped the process carry on but also it allowed us to sit there as an expert to a certain extent. So when statements were made within a participatory group which were actually blatantly wrong there was the opportunity to inject some science, whereas if we hadn't been there the argument would have gone on without that reality check, without that information."

The differences in how and what participants contributed within the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops provide an explanation of the products they go on to describe while also offering an insight into the different levels of commitment and understanding within the participatory process. The reluctance of relevant authorities to make their substantive contributions within the participatory space is an indication not only of their uncertain commitment to the participatory approach but also of the unequal understanding and resources amongst stakeholders. The Environment Agency's and English Nature's appreciation of the consultation process that would follow the participation ensured they made the bulk of their contributions outside of the participatory space. By doing so they undermined the Stakeholder Dialogue principle of equality. While the Environment Agency regarded the participatory process as an opportunity to remove the 'red herrings' suggested by local stakeholders, the same local stakeholders were denied the opportunity to question the contributions from the relevant authority.

In contrast to the contributions made by relevant authority representatives, who focused on the objective of producing a management scheme, stakeholders from local clubs and organisations offered contributions based on the interests and context they had been invited to represent. The broad aims and inclusive agenda of Stakeholder Dialogue

ensured that these contributions covered a wide range of topics and issues. Although many of the contributions and ideas provided by stakeholders fell outside the objectives of the project, the deliberative and inclusionary features of Stakeholder Dialogue provided stakeholders with the opportunity to make them. In this way the open participatory process went some way towards reinforcing the often-misplaced expectations of participants. For instance, when asked if she thought this process was an opportunity to discuss her concerns about Pegwell Bay the representative of the Cliffs End Residents Association said:

> "absolutely yes, and there was an opportunity to put ideas forward, and ....we were given a piece of paper to write on your thoughts..... some people would put bait digging or something, and they stuck them all on the board. I must confess I stuck a lot of Pegwell Bay ones, that's why I went, I wasn't going to stick to one, you really have to make your presence felt at these things. I presume that's probably why I was asked to go in the first place."

Among the quotes provided by non-relevant authority stakeholders it is possible to discern three themes: *local knowledge*, *local concerns* and *interest representation*. The following set of results provides examples for each of these themes.

7.3.1.1 **Theme**: *Local knowledge*

The analysis identified a number of occasions when participants contributed their local knowledge and expertise to the process. In some cases the Stakeholder Dialogue process asked direct questions of the participants. For instance, at the first workshop stakeholders were asked to locate on a map where their activities took place. At other times the participatory space provided stakeholders with the opportunity to correct the statements of relevant authorities. A member of the Ramsgate Royal Temple Yacht Club described how the process allowed him to correct the assumptions relevant authorities had about the conservation impact of sailing. He said:

> "I think they got, one of the ideas was to look after the reef and the caves and somebody must have thought well anybody who is going out to sea will have an effect on the reef. I had to tell them that the one thing we don't like is getting anywhere near the reef."

Similarly bait-diggers were able to alleviate some of the concerns English Nature had regarding the disturbance their activity caused to turnstones feeding on the foreshore. A comment from the English Nature Project Officer indicates that not only were the bait-diggers able to contribute their knowledge but also that they were heard. She said:

> "there were lots of concerns [from English Nature] about birds and bait digging. And I think from what I understand at the moment that was shown to be a redundant anxiety. Because the birds were somewhere different from where most of the bait diggers go, and they [the bait diggers] move very slowly and ponderously across open flat areas and the birds don't seem that bothered."

Although Stakeholder Dialogue provided an opportunity for participants to contribute their local knowledge it also created a potentially damaging space in which local experiential knowledge can be seen to challenge the expert knowledge of relevant authorities. The deliberative and inclusive features of Stakeholder Dialogue ensure there are repeated opportunities for stakeholders to suggest explanations or actions on the basis of knowledge grounded in local experiences. In fact participants are encouraged through the use of participatory tools, such as the Carousel, to make contributions based on their local experiences. However, unless Stakeholder Dialogue, and in particular the relevant authorities, are seen to consider these suggestions the process runs the risk of giving stakeholders a false impression of influence. The representative from the water ski club described her frustration at not being listened to when she tried to tell them why bird numbers were falling:

> "We got a letter from them, saying that they're very interested in terns.... The terns are trying to breed there apparently and they want to know why the terns haven't bred....., do we know of any activity that's going on? Yes I do, I tried to explain that....if you don't control the herring gulls you're not going to get the terns, but nobody wanted to know. When I said about it there was, I don't know if he was an ornithologist, but he was to do with the birds and he said 'no they've just relocated'. No they haven't, they haven't relocated, live here see it over the years as it is, they are not relocating they are taking over....They value what they know and what they say and they manipulated what we said to suit themselves."

In creating this space for local knowledge, Stakeholder Dialogue must make provisions for addressing the contributions that follow. If it does not, this apparent contradiction can be found at the root of accusations of manipulation and frustration.

7.3.1.2 Theme: *Local concerns*

By inviting local stakeholders to a participatory process involving local authority officers, Stakeholder Dialogue provided participants with the opportunity to raise local concerns with local decision makers. The broad aims of the Thanet project described the interests of many stakeholder groups and as a result many saw their concerns as being sympathetic with those of the workshops. This sense of relevance is reinforced by the confirmation that comes as a result of stakeholder invitation. In the second workshop each stakeholder was invited to put forward his or her ideas as to how the coast could be better used and improved. From this over 300 ideas were generated, many of which related to specific local concerns that stakeholders brought to the process. As the process opened up and created opportunities for deliberation participants often returned to their particular concern. In many cases these local concerns arose from the history of debate surrounding the land use management of the Thanet coast. Issues such as the development of the old hover port site and the discharge of sewage by Southern Water were both recurring themes that stakeholders contributed to the process. The local geologist offers a description of the local concerns that were brought to the workshops:

> "there are many varied conflicts along the coastline and a lot of those got aired during the workshops. A lot of the issues were too far above the remit of what this will do [the management scheme]. For instance the Foreness Point Sewage Action Group had a major voice within the workshop. It really couldn't be slotted in to that workshop....They felt that that the forum was going to give them a voice and get something done as regards their particular concern was concerned. And it didn't, because it can't."

The contributions made by stakeholders such as those from the Foreness Point Action club were clearly determined by the context that surrounded the Stakeholder Dialogue process. The process of designing the Stakeholder Dialogue workshop only engaged with a minority of the participating stakeholders and was firmly based around the objectives defined by the management group. As a result they had only a limited awareness of the various different debates surrounding the Thanet coastline and were unaware of the local concerns and issues that some stakeholders brought to the process. This limited understanding of context, coupled with the inclusionary design of Stakeholder Dialogue, ensures that much of what the process engages with is unknown.

7.3.1.3 Theme: *Interest representation*

The theme of interest representation emerged from the analysis in response to comments from participants describing how and what they contributed to the workshops. The role of participants as interest representatives was influential in determining how stakeholders engaged with the participatory process, and in turn with the products and experiences they describe following its conclusion. The motivation behind stakeholder participation comes from the opportunity to represent their interest. However, unlike the interest representation of relevant authorities, the incentive for local stakeholders' attendance could often be linked back to issues that fell outside the remit of the workshops. The unequal understanding of both project objectives and the Stakeholder Dialogue boundaries led to varying interest-based expectations, which in turn led to a great diversity in interest-based contributions. For instance Broadstairs Sailing Club was concerned with issues of access and had hoped the process would allow them to contribute on this subject. The Commodore of the club said:

> "we are concerned with using the sea, but we're also concerned with access to it too. I think this was a problem that the group that I was on didn't seem even to talk about, although I brought it up. I was told that's up to TDC, that's not what we're looking at. It seems to me that access is a terribly important thing."

When the participatory process allowed, stakeholders returned to their interest and made contributions relating to issues they recognised as being important. For instance: more slipways for the diving club, better interpretation and protection of local archaeological sites and insufficient removal of rubbish bags by the council were all issues raised by different stakeholders.

While interest representation clearly influenced the content of stakeholders contributions it also impacted on how participants engaged with the process. During the analysis this theme was originally coded as the *personal interest sieve* in recognition of the often-selective engagement defined by interest representation. The land yacht representative described how participants were often intent on focusing on their interests:

> "I found it very inevitable that they [stakeholders] would end up going off on a tangent and talk about something completely different, because they wanted to talk about their activities. So having been sat down and told we were going to discuss dredging or whatever, one of the guys in one of the groups was a guest house proprietor and he really wanted to talk about what effects this was going to have on his guest house and so he did."

The analysis showed how interest-focused participation can be frustrated by participatory techniques that provide opportunities for inclusive dialogue. Participants expect to be able to contribute their knowledge on the issues they were invited to represent. If the participatory process is unaware of these issues and of the knowledge different participants bring to the process it runs the risk of denying stakeholders the very opportunity the workshops were intended to offer. In applying open coded analysis it becomes possible to see how interest representation and Stakeholder Dialogue design combine to produce the contributions referred to by the stakeholders. Again, the land yacht representative provides a clear description of how the facilitated process defined and restricted his opportunity to discuss his interest:

> "We were split up into groups and the groups would be discussing and producing results on a certain item or activity.....but those groups weren't manned by the people who had the knowledge. So in other words I found myself in a group for three quarters of an hour discussing deep-sea fishing or something like that which I know nothing about and over in another group I could see they'd got land yachting and they were discussing that. I don't know what came up about discussions about land yachting because I wasn't in that group."

This quote hints at an underlying tension running through the participatory stakeholder process. The collective decision-making purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue challenges stakeholders to move away from their interest-focused objective and instead engage in dialogue towards a collective goal. In doing so it effectively shifts the subject of participation away from the subject that provided the motivation for stakeholder participation.

7.3.2 Facilitated stakeholder decision-making

Each of the Thanet workshops was designed and run by a team of facilitators and staff from The Environment Council. Intended outputs were identified and participatory activities employed in order to steer the content of the deliberative process towards

these projected goals. The resulting participatory space was very much an independently managed decision-making process. Participants' contributions were controlled and directed through the use of facilitated participatory techniques. In many cases this active control provided participants with a structure in which they were able to contribute what they wanted. However, there were participants for whom the managed process acted as a barrier to contribution. The following set of results offers evidence for both these responses to the facilitated process and highlights the influence of purpose in determining stakeholder contribution.

7.3.2.1 Theme: *Opportunity*

In the Influence Diagram (Fig 7.3) this theme is represented by the box called Stakeholder Dialogue. The Stakeholder Dialogue process is designed and facilitated so as to provide participants with the opportunity to contribute. Given the variation in Stakeholder Dialogue practice that results from a bespoke approach, the role of the lead facilitator emerges as a key influence in defining the opportunity participants are given to contribute. The lead facilitator uses their experience and expertise to put together a program of participatory activities that will move the process towards an intended goal while also allowing participants to contribute their ideas and concerns. Thus the position of the facilitator emerges as a key independent variable in providing stakeholders with the opportunity to contribute.

Many participants commented on how the facilitated process generated many different ideas and suggestions. For instance the Diving Club representative said:

> "well it's a way of getting people's opinions, probably better than if somebody sat me down with a pencil and sheet of paper and said, give me a few ideas. Perhaps I would be more lost. But because the way the facilitator opens up things and one question leads to another and then you can see there are, not exactly answers but you can get different points of view and ideas."

Others were happy to acknowledge how the expert facilitation ensured the process was not dominated by any one group, but instead allowed all stakeholders to participate. Asked if he thought anybody dominated the process the TDC Planning Officer said:

> "I think what was remarkable about it was that didn't really seem to happen, people were able to express their views. It was interesting because the.. people who had particular axes to grind although they were heard weren't able to sort of dominate proceedings."

The Stakeholder Dialogue workshops were built around a principle of transparency that ensured the contributions made by participants were recorded. This verbatim record provided participants with the opportunity to refer to past contributions and assess the influence of their statements. There are suggestions from the participants, such as the local geologist below, who say that this transparent recording encouraged them to contribute, knowing that what they suggested would be included in the outputs of each workshop.

> "You have a chance to assess whether what you said has been taken on board, whether it's encompassed in the document you get through the post and if it's not you've got another chance to have a push at it, so therefore at the end really, whatever the outcome is you're all going to be happy."

7.3.2.2 Theme: *Control*

Although some participants welcomed the opportunity provided by the facilitated dialogue process, for others it represented an obstruction to their effective contribution. Rather than facilitating contributions some participants saw the participatory techniques as controlling opportunities for input. The predetermined design of each workshop reinforced the impression of a controlled environment in which contributions were managed and directed. The strictly orchestrated process of working in groups to fixed time periods added to this sense of controlled dialogue. Similarly, by dictating the subject for group discussions the process controlled the content of the dialogue and restricted contributions. This was highlighted by the Land Sailing Club representative who said:

> "Another major criticism I would have is that....and again I think this is a manipulative tactic, we would be given a list of items that they thought were potential threats to the environment,....and told to go and discuss them in a very strict limited amount of time. But nobody ever thought to ask us if we wanted to put extra ones on there or add any. But at the end of the day those were the items we decided were important issues."

Asked if he felt the process started out with a 'blank piece of paper' he went on to say:

> "No never, this is the thing, we were given paper that already had things on it and I think I may well have asked the facilitator can we think up things and he probably said yes but only as an afterthought. Again we would go off for a certain amount of time to discuss these items that they had typed out as being a threat and there was no space at the bottom of the paper or anything. Then we were told these were what we had decided were threats and really we hadn't decided at all. Again we were being manipulated."

The representative from the local water ski club described a similar response to the managed participatory process.

> "When we got there, it was not an open discussion. You were told which table you were sat on, obviously you do as you're told. You sat at a table and there was somebody in charge of the table from them [referring to English Nature], not independent. Then you were asked set questions, well by asking the set questions you could not give what you considered...[does not complete this sentence]"

Within the theme of control there is an important distinction between the stakeholders from relevant authorities and those participants representing local interest or user groups. Whereas some local stakeholders perceived the process as a controlled and managed event, relevant authority officers tended to view the workshops as offering a blank canvas to the participants. This was even voiced as a concern by the Director of Tourism & Leisure at Thanet District Council:

> "I suppose if I've got a concern sometimes about the process, it is almost starting with a clean sheet of paper, of actually saying to someone, here you are you're starting with this clean sheet of paper."

Rather than describe the opportunity for contribution as controlled and managed relevant authorities are more likely to refer to the opportunity this participatory approach offered local stakeholders. It is interesting to note that instead of commenting on how the process allowed them to contribute to the management scheme and coastal action plan, relevant authority stakeholders described the potential it offered *non*-relevant authority participants. Given the earlier quotes from non-relevant stakeholders this belief would appear to be somewhat misplaced, meaning that relevant authorities had a false impression of how other participants perceived the workshops. The

representative from the Environment Agency provides a good example of this; when asked to describe how he thought the products from the workshops differed from what would have been produced using a traditional consultation process he said:

> "I think from the agency's statutory responsibility probably not greatly different because I think we would have made the same arguments whether we had been consulted in a conventional manner or not. I think the biggest differences were the smaller people, the public, the smaller groups that have an interest and wouldn't have a voice would be included on the consultation list, probably under normal circumstances. I think that's where the difference is."

The different opportunities Stakeholder Dialogue offered participants provides a possible explanatory root for the various products and experiences stakeholders go on to describe.

7.3.2.3 **Theme:** *Strategic decision-making*

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the open coding analysis refers to the complex and shifting perceptions of Stakeholder Dialogue as a strategic decision-making process. The phrase 'strategic decision-making' is used to capture a range of comments referring to process capture and manipulation through dialogue design and loss of perceived independent facilitation. Figure 7.3 identifies the key influences involved in creating this pervasive sense of strategic direction and shows how they are determined by the factors outside of the bounded dialogue space. The comments from participants suggest that it had considerable influence on the process of contribution.

Few local stakeholders recognised the workshops as being independently run by an outside organisation. Instead they identified English Nature as the convenor and organiser behind the project. Asked who she thought was running the process the representative from the Cliffs End Residents Association said:

> "Diana Pound from English Nature and was it Jeff [this was the facilitator], he was the man who talked all the time... All the correspondence came from English Nature and was headed English Nature."

This comment is largely representative of the answers provided by non-relevant authority participants. Despite the fact that the project had the twin objectives of

conservation management and economic regeneration, English Nature was consistently identified from among the different relevant authorities as the organisation running the workshops. The high profile role of English Nature and the resulting loss of independence of the facilitation team stemmed from what, for many, was the hidden influence of the Habitats Directive. It is this legislative driver behind the conservation objective that meant participants recognised what was often an unexpected conservation emphasis within the participatory process.

The non-negotiable outputs defined by the Habitats Directive amplified the perception of Stakeholder Dialogue as a managed process by ensuring the facilitators maintained a focus on one subject. For a number of stakeholders who participated for reasons other than those identified by the Habitats Directive this served to limit their contribution. For instance, when asked if she thought her aims were relevant to the workshops, the same representative from the Cliffs End Residents Association said:

> "I thought they would be, but I found that they were not. I did find that I really didn't get very far. I used to spout my little thing.....There were a few people there that mentioned that they didn't want it to be [hover port] redeveloped commercially but on the whole I found that this area was not discussed very much, it was much more devoted to talking about the chalk reefs and the caves and every detail you could think of about birds."

Along with the managed opportunities for participant contribution and the apparent influence of English Nature the unexpected emphasis on conservation issues led some participants to describe the workshops as an exercise in manipulation. Asked if he thought the process generated ownership among the stakeholders the land yacht representative said:

> "Well personally no,....if there are several stakeholders that feel they've got a degree of ownership over the decisions then I think they were the ones that were manipulated the most, or what's another word, managed, anyway we'll say manipulated."

Although not all stakeholders felt manipulated by the participatory approach, the emphasis on conservation meant many were left with an impression their contributions carried little weight and the decisions had already been made. This is borne out by the comment from the President of Margate Hotel & Guest House Association who said:

> "Yeah I think there was a role for the hoteliers going, but whether I was able to put our ideas forward I'm not so sure, I thought it was a stage where it had all been decided upon anyway."

The representative of the local diving club provides another example of how an impression that decisions had already been made determined the process of contribution.

> "No personally I shouldn't think I made a lot of difference,.....No I think it would be truthful to say I didn't make a lot of difference....but I think probably the people who run them had ideas at the start of what they wanted, and you were steered in that direction."

7.3.2.4 Theme: *Confusion*

For many stakeholders the Thanet workshops represented their first introduction to participatory decision-making, and for many of these the conservation focus of the dialogue was also new. Rather than creating an accessible environment in which all participants were equally able to contribute, the workshops confused some participants. The conservation focus of the participatory process favoured those stakeholders who were familiar with the language of conservation and the methods of Stakeholder Dialogue. For those that were not familiar the focus of discussions was often confusing, as the representative of the land yacht club says:

> " to be perfectly honest the different designations, which were explained to us, were just so confusing for a layman to understand ....it was quite a lot of technical talk that went over quite a lot of people's heads and so having had all these different initials thrown at me I was probably just confused and it didn't mean a lot to me."

Box 7.3 Summary Box

The process of contribution is shaped by the complex interaction of a number of different factors. Importantly many of these factors are unrecognised by the Stakeholder Dialogue process; this is one reason why stakeholders who were not from relevant authorities and did not sit on the management group often describe a different process of contribution from those that were. The facilitated nature of the dialogue process presented a controlled and managed environment to some participants. Coupled with the unexpected dominance of conservation issues this led some stakeholders to see the process of contribution as an exercise in manipulation. However, there were some participants from non-relevant authorities who thought the process allowed them to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

7.4 The results of Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet

The Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue process concluded with the fourth workshop on 7th June 1999. This innovative approach to participatory decision-making resulted in a complicated and diffuse set of outcomes. It is clear from the preceding Influence Diagrams and quotations that the results of Stakeholder Dialogue are a response to the contextually embedded position of the participatory approach. History, stakeholder interests and legislative boundaries are just some of the contextual factors that combine with the participatory process to deliver the outcomes described below. Describing the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue requires the analysis and presentation of results to distinguish between the influence of participatory process and the influence of context. Along with the previous Influence Diagrams and quotations the following Product Diagram highlights the role of context in the descriptions of outputs and outcomes provided by stakeholders. The results illustrated by Figure 7.4 should be seen as the conclusion to the process set out in the previous two Influence Diagrams. Together these diagrams make a significant contribution to answering the four questions set out under the first research aim in Chapter 1.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the results from the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops is the great variation in the recognition and descriptions of outcomes provided by different participants. The root of such variation is to be found in the multiple understandings of aims and expectations that stakeholders bring to the process in response to their interest representation and their understanding of the project.

The following presentation of results builds on the relationships shown in Figure 7.4 below. In doing so it reflects on the lines of influence between the substantive and the intangible products described by stakeholders. The substantive products of the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops in Thanet are linked to the initial objectives, whereas the intangible results are associated with the participatory approach used to deliver these objectives. Box 7.4 below presents the intended outputs from the Stakeholder Dialogue process as they were described in the invitation to tender details.

Box 7.4 Intended outputs of Stakeholder Dialogue in Thanet

1. Creative ideas for new sustainable coastal tourism and recreational initiatives, which create new jobs.
2. The content for a well supported and implementable management scheme for the Thanet European Marine site.
3. The content of an action plan to bring about the implementation of collaboratively agreed activities and actions that fall outside the management scheme.

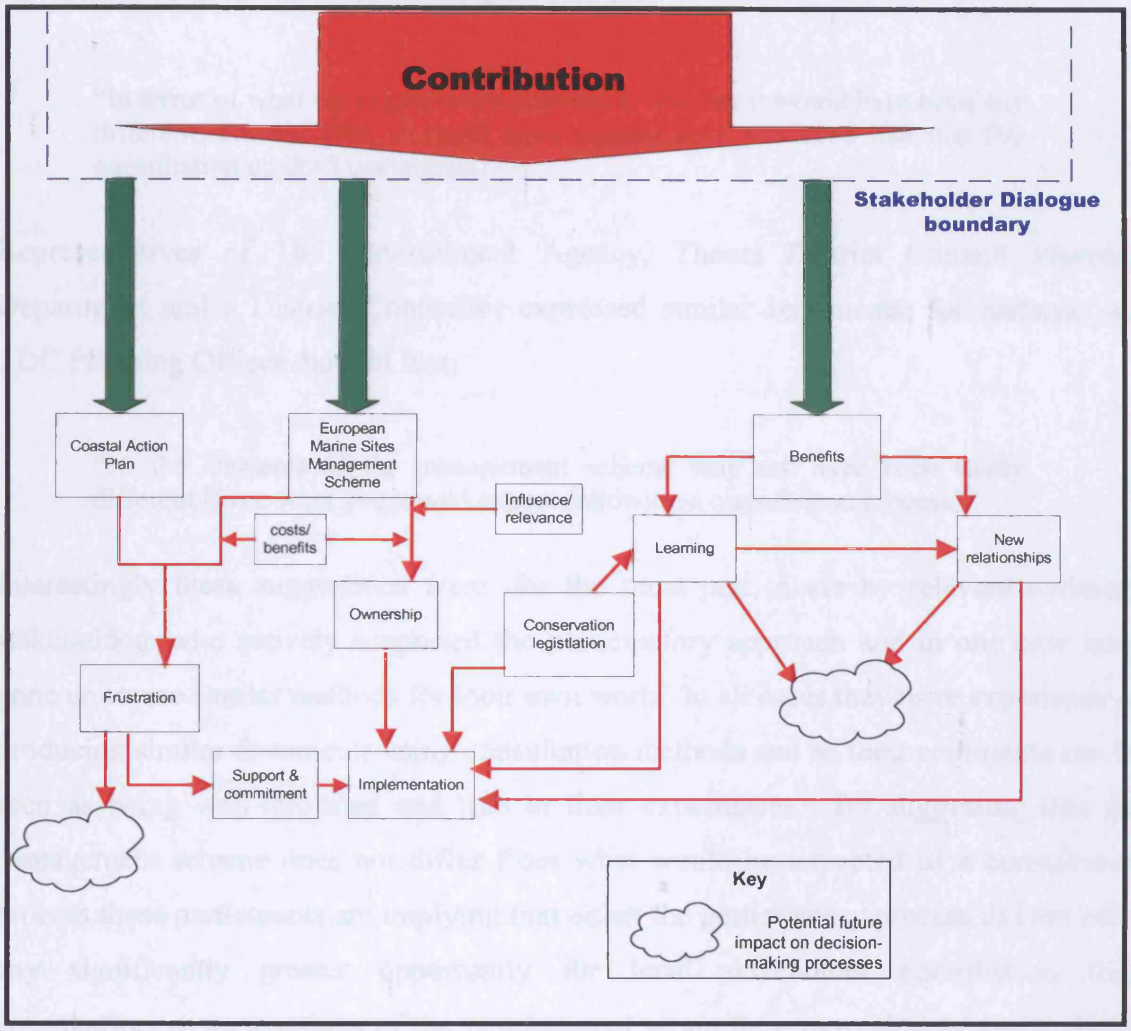
The evaluation shows that while the products of the process are defined by the interaction between the participatory process and its context they are shaped by the environment following the workshops. The retrospective perspective of the evaluation allows the study to describe how the products evolve and to assess their permanence and transferability.

The results set out below are drawn mainly from the comments participants offered during the in-depth interviews. In addition to these quotations the results are reinforced or explained further with reference to material from the participant observation exercises and the written material that arose following the final workshop. In particular the content of the management scheme provides an important secondary data source, as does the management group's report to the Objective 2 funding committee within Thanet District Council.

7.4.1 Theme: *The North East Kent European Marine Sites Management Scheme*

The North East Kent European Marine Sites Management Scheme (from here on referred to as the management scheme) was launched on the 27th of June 2001. The final management scheme is a substantial document running to 170 pages in length and provides comprehensive activity assessment tables for a broad range of coastal activities. The management scheme was written by the English Nature Project Officer in response to the issues raised during the workshops.

Fig 7.4 Products of Stakeholder Dialogue



The purpose of the management scheme is to provide a "framework within which current ongoing activities will be managed, either voluntarily or through regulation, so as to achieve the nature conservation objectives of the European marine site supplied by English Nature" (Management Scheme 2001:6). As a result the management scheme is an exclusively conservation-focused document.

The foreword to the management scheme describes the document as unique amongst the fifteen European marine sites in England developing management schemes at the time, and places great importance on the role the 106 different stakeholders played in producing the final document. However, despite this emphasis on the influence of stakeholders, the comments provided by many relevant authority staff suggest the content does not differ significantly from what they might have expected from a

traditional consultation process. For instance, asked how he thought it differed the representative from Kent County Council said that:

> "In terms of what we've got in the document, whether it would have been any different, I'm not sure, it could have equally been produced like that [by consultation on draft documents]."

Representatives of The Environment Agency, Thanet District Council Planning Department and a District Councillor expressed similar sentiments; for instance one TDC Planning Officer thought that:

> "... the elements of the management scheme may not have been vastly different [from what you would expect following a consultation process]."

Interestingly these suggestions were, for the most part, made by relevant authority stakeholders who actively supported the participatory approach and in one case have gone on to use similar methods for their own work. In all cases they have experience of producing similar documents using consultation methods and so their comments can be seen as being well-informed and true to their experiences. By suggesting that the management scheme does not differ from what would be expected of a consultation process these participants are implying that either the participatory process did not offer any significantly greater opportunity for local stakeholder contribution than consultation, or as members of the management group they were already aware of the issue raised by local participants, or, finally, that the tightly bounded conservation focus of the document prevented the contributions of local stakeholders from becoming content. Within this chapter there are various quotations that suggest that the first two of these possibilities cannot be true. Stakeholders speak of the opportunity the process allowed them, while relevant authority representatives speak of how local stakeholder contributions were a source of learning for many. The Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve warden suggests that the Habitats Directive provides such tight boundaries that there was little scope for the management scheme to differ from its final content. Asked whether he thought the management scheme differed greatly from what he would have expected from a consultation process he said:

> "it would be on small scale details not major headings, the headings would be the same whatever way you did it. EN had to work within quite narrow

> boundaries really, they were going to have to set down certain constraints of use within the SAC come what may to be honest."

There are non-relevant authority stakeholders who are unwilling to describe the content of the management scheme as any different from what they might have expected from a strictly consultation process. Explanation for this reluctance is to be traced back to the perception of a managed and directional dialogue. For instance, the local CPRE representative commented that:

> "I think that the powers that be in Thanet had an agenda that they were going to push through anyway."

Similar views were expressed by representatives of local user groups, hotel associations and residents' groups. It is important to realise that in some cases these opinions are clearly shaped by the participant's response to the participatory approach. For instance the CPRE representative regarded the process as a talking shop that effectively removed the influence CPRE may have enjoyed in the past as an established NGO. He described the privileged relationship CPRE had enjoyed in the past.

> "I think decision-making is made by the powers that be, with a bit of input from the big players, in which I include English Nature, other government agencies, National Trust, RSPB, CPRE and we have a very cosy relationship."

The same participant did not engage with the language and techniques of Stakeholder Dialogue:

> "I don't like the way that it was done. The person that organised it all, I think they had bought a book called teach yourself workshopping and hadn't fully understood it... Let's all get together guys.... That's not how politics works.... The next person who says let's all brainstorm I will kill."

The comments of this participant should be seen alongside his position as Chairman of the local Conservative Club, which he acknowledged informed his position regarding the operations of the Labour-led Thanet District Council.

Although there is an apparent reluctance to describe any significant influence on the content of the management scheme, many of the same participants readily acknowledge

that without the participatory approach it is unlikely the management scheme would have ever been produced. This position is most strongly represented by those stakeholders who were aware of the objection lodged by Thanet District Council and their level of opposition to the designation. For instance, the Director of Planning recognises that any other approach to developing the management scheme is unlikely to have moved the debate forward:

> "I don't think we would have gone forward with a more traditional method, I think without having this sort of approach [Stakeholder Dialogue] I think we would still be arguing about it now."

This quote has particular emphasis coming from the Director of Planning who actively sought to oppose the designation and was unwilling to commit to the participatory approach until it was three-quarters of the way through. However, for the many stakeholders who were not motivated by the production of a management scheme, nor aware of the stagnation caused by Thanet District Council's objection, the influence of the participatory approach remains hidden. The variable awareness regarding the significance of the Stakeholder Dialogue approach describes the division between relevant and non-relevant authority representatives that was first introduced in the different understandings of aims and backgrounds that stakeholders brought to the process. This same division in stakeholders is equally apparent when considering the various levels of ownership over the management scheme that surface through the analysis.

7.4.2 Theme: *Ownership*

Ownership is an interesting theme that emerges as a complicated construct built from the cumulative effect of numerous influences operating before, during and after the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. It has implications for the future implementation of the management scheme and perhaps less obviously on the relationships between stakeholders. In the discussion below I highlight the various factors that combine to influence the ownership a stakeholder might experience regarding the management scheme. I then go on to describe the different levels of ownership arising from the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

7.4.2.1 Influencing ownership

In order for Stakeholder Dialogue successfully to generate ownership amongst stakeholders it must provide them with reasons to develop a sense of attachment and responsibility towards the management scheme. Stakeholder Dialogue seeks to establish these ties between participants and products through two features of design. Firstly, the inclusive agenda of Stakeholder Dialogue identifies individuals and organisations who are in some way impacted upon by the potential changes arising from the process. If the subject of discussion is relevant to participants then so should be the products. By establishing relevance of participants the process is provided with the foundations for future claims of ownership. The second feature of design is the emphasis placed on creating opportunities for contribution. By using small groups, experienced facilitators and participatory techniques Stakeholder Dialogue provides participants with the opportunity to contribute to decisions that are of relevance to them. In this way contribution builds on the foundations of relevance provided by the inclusive agenda and in doing so might be described as establishing process-based ownership. In order for process-based ownership to be confirmed as product ownership, participants will need to recognise a relevant product that they feel they have contributed to. This final stage in the development of ownership amongst participants lies outside of the participatory process and is determined by a combination of commitment to the participatory method by key decision-making stakeholders and any legislative constraints placed on the results.

The above description outlines three stages in which ownership might be seen to be influenced: inclusion, contribution and results. The key influences at each of these stages are set out in the Influence and Product Diagrams above. Of particular importance within the first two stages are those factors that determine the stakeholder selection process and those that influence the opportunities for contribution. However, the greatest influence is to be found following the conclusion of the participatory workshops. If there is neither sufficient commitment nor statutory responsibility to deliver on the contributions made during the workshops, participants will be denied any significant reason to describe a sense of ownership over the products. In the Product Diagram this is represented by the box entitled Influence/Relevance. These terms are taken from the comments made by stakeholders and refer to the varying levels of

influence and relevance the management scheme had for different participants. It is possible for the final step from process to products to contradict the impression given by the inclusive agenda and the opportunities for contribution provided by the workshops, and in doing so set up a roller coaster ride of ownership and expectation. The local geologist who participated in all four workshops alludes to this fluctuation in ownership when he says:

> "It's got less actually as time's gone on from when the workshops were undertaken. I think as soon as you stop participating that sense diminishes and again when the codes of conduct are implemented maybe that sense of responsibility or ownership may return because you're then beginning to see the fruits of your labour more."

The strength of ownership a participant describes may also be determined by their personal calculation of the cost:benefits ratio they experienced as a result of their participation. This is shown in Figure 7.4 as the box marked costs/benefits. This balance between costs and benefits acts as a secondary influence, either reinforcing or weakening the strength of ownership defined by the three-step evolution described above.

7.4.2.2 Description of ownership

Despite the considerable variation in participants' expectations and contributions, the in-depth interviews highlighted a surprising consistency in the level of ownership participants described. Although there are differences between the ownership described by relevant and non–relevant authority representatives, the majority of participants fail to describe any significant level of attachment or responsibility regarding the management scheme. However, very few participants explicitly referred to any sense of ownership when they described the management scheme. Instead, ownership, or lack of, was implied through the terms used to describe the management scheme and the use of possessive pronouns: ours, mine, and theirs. One of the few stakeholders to refer explicitly to ownership was the representative from the Kent Land-Sailing Club who suggested that those stakeholders who felt any ownership had been manipulated.

It is clear from his comments and previous quotes by the same participant that the managed and controlled opportunities for dialogue removed any reason for him to attach ownership to the management scheme. This is a participant who was happy to acknowledge that he entered the process "completely with an open mind". He was not aware of any existing conflict regarding coastal management and had a positive relationship with the Thanet District Council foreshore manager. He understood the aims of the workshops to be "to protect the coastline and its natural resources and at the same time promote tourism", very much in keeping with how they were presented to the stakeholders. In other words his reaction to the products from the process can be seen as a response to the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops and the outputs that they delivered, rather than any negative relationship with relevant authorities.

Although few other participants actually refer so explicitly to a low sense of ownership, there are many who imply similar levels of detachment in their descriptions of the management scheme. Rather than describe the management scheme in positive terms, stakeholders from Thanet clubs and associations are likely to see it as a paper product of little relevance to their interests. For example the Commodore of Broadstairs Sailing Club said:

> "...it was really an exercise in bureaucracy so that when somebody says, what have you been doing this year they can produce that and say, look at that [referring to the MS), there is the Brazilian rain forest..... As far as I am concerned that was the only thing I had out of it, which I thought was bureaucracy at its best."

There are some stakeholders, for example the President of the Ramsgate Hotel Association, who were *unaware* of the management scheme and therefore unable to attach any ownership to its production.

The low level of ownership described by some participants offers a subtle contradiction to their acknowledgement of contributing to the production of the management scheme. A number of representatives from local user groups described how they provided information that ensured they were able to continue their activities largely unaffected by the management scheme. For instance the representative from Foreness Water Ski club was able to successfully defend her club's activities.

> "They [EN} were saying they don't want us running our boats over there, but whether right or wrong over 30 years a channel was cut in that reef to make a smooth surface. And so we are still running, we always will run on that chalk channel I mean, once that was explained to them, they decided yes we could still...I suppose in that respect I kept the boat launch for us."

However, this was not sufficient for her to express any sense of ownership over the management scheme, which she describes as "this final book, which I haven't ever had time to read." Contributing in order to maintain the *status quo*, something she never felt was going to change anyway, was not enough for her to develop any attachment to the management scheme.

Comments from relevant authority representatives reveal an interesting distinction between the level of ownership they feel the workshops generated and that described by non-relevant authority participants. A number of officers from local authorities and national agencies believe the participatory approach has ensured that local stakeholders have a strong sense of ownership over the management scheme. When asked what he felt separated the products of this approach from what he would have expected following a consultation process the Director of Tourism & Leisure at TDC said:

> "I suppose probably the most important thing is the ownership bit, if you actually get sort of 90% people agreeing about doing things then it's done sort of positively."

The only TDC member to regularly participate also commented on the high level of ownership she felt the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops had delivered.

> "What's come out of the workshops has been a document that most people are happy with, and agreements between various organisations as to where they shouldn't go, the jet skiers are happy not to do certain things, and everybody feels that they own the document."

These comments are representative of the assumption within the relevant authorities that the participatory process generated ownership. They do not offer any evidence that supports their prediction of ownership. Indeed, their limited contact with participants following the workshops would offer them little opportunity to identify ownership of the management scheme.

Box 7.4 Summary Box

The delivery of products that reflect the interests of the participants and that they feel they have contributed towards provides the basis for ownership amongst all stakeholders. This is impacted upon by the commitment to the notion of participatory decision-making by the relevant authorities, the influence of the Habitats Directive in determining the focus of the products and the balance of costs and benefits stakeholders associate with the products they see from their time participating. Few participants make any explicit reference to ownership; instead their comments suggest an acceptance of the management scheme. However, there is an assumption on the part of the relevant authorities that the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops generated ownership among the remaining participants.

7.4.3 Theme: *Implementation*

The management scheme builds on the information collected during the workshops to provide a detailed action plan for the period of 2000/2001 to 2005/2006. The implementation of this action plan is to be undertaken by individual relevant authorities, either on their own or in partnership with others. The process of implementation that followed the workshops provides a valuable opportunity to estimate the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. The following section reviews the implementation that has occurred to date and identifies the key influences that have helped to shape the actions that have followed the workshops.

In July 2001 a Coastal Project Officer was appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the management scheme. Five relevant authorities along with matched Objective 2 funding provided the financial support for this position; the breakdown of the annual contributions is provided below.

Table 7.1: Annual funding commitments for the Coastal Project Officer, 2001-2003

Relevant Authority	Amount (£000)
Southern Water	3.5
Environment Agency	2
Kent County Council	2
English Nature	17.5
Thanet District Council	4
Objective 2 funding	12.5

The appointment of a Project Officer represents a significant commitment on the part of these supporting relevant authorities. Although Thanet District Council chose not to withdraw their original objection to the designation, following the workshops their position had changed sufficiently for them to be able to provide financial support. The majority of their contribution was given in terms of support in kind through the provision of office space and computers. Nonetheless this represents a significant change in position from that held in the late 1990s. The broad support for this post from both the national conservation agency and the local authority is a reflection of the range of objectives and responsibilities attached to the position. When the post was first advertised in May 2001 the description of duties captured three broad themes that had originally been identified in the Objective 2 funding bid. Alongside the responsibility to produce, follow and monitor the effectiveness of agreed codes of conduct, applicants were told they would also need to assist the Tourism and Development Manager in the development of green tourism, and work with the Council's Arts Development Officer to promote an appreciation of the coastline (Job advert for Coastal Wildlife Project Officer May 2001, Appendix M). However, in contrast to these responsibilities, the objectives set out by English Nature, the principal funder for the post, detail a series of actions based around developing codes of conduct and establishing a GIS-based monitoring system. Here the emphasis is very much on ensuring the delivery of the Habitats Regulations. The legislative driver that provided

the original stimulus for the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops defines the focus for actions that follow and, in doing so prioritises conservation over the themes to have emerged through the Stakeholder Dialogue process.

The priority for the Project Officer was to establish codes of conduct for the variety of foreshore-based activities that would ensure the designated features were maintained in favourable condition. In total nine codes were produced between 2001 and 2003. Each code of conduct was drafted in a small participatory workshop attended by individuals from the relevant interest groups and facilitated by the new Project Officer. It was the hope of the English Nature Project Officer and the newly appointed Coastal Project Officer that the previous four Stakeholder Dialogue workshops would have established a baseline of awareness amongst user groups and a momentum that would ease the development of codes of conduct. Instead, participant observation exercises at three of the five codes of conduct workshops identified a number of challenges to the development of codes of conduct. A lack of awareness and ownership amongst participants coupled with long-established disagreements between different user groups ensured the codes took longer to produce than had been originally intended.

The shore-angling workshop on the 15th November 2001 highlighted a poor level of understanding amongst local fishermen regarding both the designation and the Stakeholder Dialogue workshop. Only one fisherman had attended any of the original workshops and as a result time was spent bringing everybody else up to speed. The lack of wider understanding amongst the shore fishing community is a reflection of the reliance Stakeholder Dialogue places on effective representation. The same workshop uncovered a strong level of distrust and animosity in how fishermen regarded birdwatchers, evidence of which is provided by one description of the RSPB as the "conservation Taliban". There was a similar level of mistrust associated with powerboat users, English Nature and the National Trust (owners of Pegwell Bay). One participant at the meeting questioned the accuracy of the management scheme, describing Map 9 in the management scheme, showing fishing and harvesting locations, as "worthless, just completely wrong."

The powerboat users' code of conduct workshops highlighted similar tensions to those raised by the local anglers. Participants challenged the findings of English Nature

sponsored research that showed the number of turnstones declining. One participant claimed that numbers were increasing and backed it up by saying he was "down on the beach seven days a week." There was very little evidence of any goodwill towards English Nature as a result of the earlier workshops.

The dog walkers' workshop on 23rd May 2002 revealed the poor ownership regarding codes of conduct. None of the participants had been at the original workshops and as a result they were unaware of the move to establish codes of conduct for different user groups. One participant challenged the use of the term codes; this was resolved by using the word guidelines instead. However, the participants at the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops had agreed upon the use of codes of conduct and this is what the workshop for dog walkers eventually produced.

In addition to the influential role of the Habitats Regulations the implementation of the management scheme is determined by the level of support and commitment amongst stakeholders. As might be expected there is considerable variation in the support and commitment participants describe, although it is possible to identify the recurring divisions between representatives from relevant authorities and local interest groups. Evidence of relevant authority support is seen in the partnership funding behind the new Project Officer position. This is backed up by comments from relevant authority representatives who see no reason not to support the management scheme as it represents an important step in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. While this funding also provides a measure of commitment, the in-depth interviews suggest it masks significant variation both between and within relevant authorities. One example of the fragile commitment within TDC can be seen in their decision to support a proposed Turner Arts Centre that extended into the SAC[47]. This proposed development is an indication of the priority TDC place on economic regeneration. In response to EN initial rejection of a winter building program[48] Councillor Gore identified the priority placed on economic regeneration, saying that:

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[47] The chosen design was one of six within an architect competition that ran shortly after the launch of the management scheme. The winning design was the only one to build above the designated beach.

[48] The winter months are when both turnstones and little terns gather on Thanet beaches.

> "English Nature said, you cannot build this centre on the beach in the winter because it will affect the birds. Well to put it quite crudely it will have affected the other sort of birds in the summer, so we had this conflict and that definitely came to committee that we had to choose between the little terns and the girls in bikinis, and logically you build in the winter because you haven't got the visitors here, and the last thing you want is a building site that's going to affect your economy."

Support for the management scheme amongst non-relevant authority stakeholders is subtly different from that described by representatives from TDC, EN and the EA. Many are happy to describe their support for the management scheme, but in doing so sometimes suggest a level of acceptance rather than support. For instance, the representative from the Cliffs End Residents Association said:

> "Oh I support them, I couldn't see any reason for going against anything that was said in particular. Mostly it was things I didn't understand, felt I couldn't really influence in any way and quite a lot of it was a bit technical for the ordinary person."

Many participants regard the management scheme as a 'good thing', but perhaps because its production was the motivation for only a selection of stakeholders' participation they do not all describe a strong level of support or attachment. In addition to this, those participants who described the Stakeholder Dialogue process as an exercise in manipulation were clearly disinclined to support the management scheme. There was reluctance amongst some participants to identify support from amongst their members, for instance the water ski club representative said:

> "Well if you speak to the rest of the members of the club, they think it's a load of old rubbish and there are certain aspects of the club and certain aspects I know of other clubs who were going to carry on regardless of what anybody said, and try to do."

Management scheme implementation is also influenced by the relationships between different stakeholders. Better communication and improved levels of trust amongst stakeholders will facilitate the delivery of management scheme actions. According to the objectives described by Pound (1999) one of the aims of the Stakeholder Dialogue process was the removal of existing conflict between stakeholders and the development of new partnerships. The following theme on benefits captures those comments that describe the changes in relationships resulting from Stakeholder Dialogue.

7.4.4 Theme: *Benefits*

The successful production of the management scheme represents a significant substantive benefit for a number of stakeholders. In addition to this, the analysis shows the Stakeholder Dialogue process to have generated important intangible benefits. The key intangible products to emerge from the analysis are captured under the headings of learning and new relationships, and are shown in Figure 7.4. Although many participants describe these products, few actually identify them as benefits they have experienced as result of their participation. This is particularly the case amongst stakeholders from local interest or activity groups who often failed to describe how they or their organisation benefited from Stakeholder Dialogue. A quote from the commodore of Broadstairs sailing club is representative of many from local stakeholders. Asked if he thought his participation in the workshops had benefited him or his sailing club he said:

> "no I wouldn't say it did, because I didn't learn anything that I didn't already know, no ideas were put forward as to what might happen in the future and there were no suggestions."

Representatives from relevant authorities were much more likely to describe benefits they experienced as a result of their participation. They often recognised the opportunity to meet stakeholders or to hear different views as being important benefits. The reasons for recognising these benefits are likely to vary between officers who see it as a necessary part of their professional job and those that personally valued the opportunity to communicate with a public they may often be removed from.

A second important feature of this theme refers to the apparent distribution of benefits described by different participants. In the majority of interviews participants were asked to identify whom they thought the Stakeholder Dialogue process benefited, and in all but one case stakeholders described participants other than themselves. The analysis suggests a poorly defined pattern that sees relevant authority staff point to local stakeholders and vice versa. However, there is variation within this division. Some relevant authority participants, who were aware of the Thanet District Council's objection, recognised that this approach effectively delivered the Council's statutory

requirements with only minimal demands on their resources. For instance the representative from Dover District Council said:

> "I think if you look at it dispassionately I think Thanet have been the main gainers because they didn't ask for the designation, they have to live with it and they've been given a way to live with it which I think they should be fairly comfortable with."

Stakeholders representing local interest groups typically emphasise 'conservationists' or English Nature as the principal beneficiaries of the Stakeholder Dialogue approach.

Although there is a sense in which participants do not always recognise benefits, there is substantive evidence within the interview transcripts of stakeholders referring positively to the process and their involvement. The following discussion organises these comments under the headings of learning and relationships.

7.4.4.1 Theme: *Learning*

Learning emerges from the Thanet interviews as a complex code containing significant variation. As with many product codes the root of any variation can be traced back to the large number of participants. Over one hundred stakeholders entered the process with contrasting reasons for their participation and often very different understandings of the purpose and context behind the workshops. These various understandings of purpose and context meant the Stakeholder Dialogue process offered each participant different opportunities for learning, while at the same time the multiple reasons for participation meant stakeholders placed different value on what they learnt.

Relevant authority representatives often described the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops as providing them with a rare opportunity to learn about the Thanet area and community. For instance the representative from Kent County Council said:

> "I probably learnt more about Thanet coast than I knew about it before. I think it was a good grounding in terms of what were local people's views, you know. And seeing the other people who you don't normally mix with, see where they're coming from, I think that's good."

Similar views were expressed by representatives from other relevant authorities, including Thanet District Council and the Environment Agency. In being offered the chance to hear from local coastal users and interested parties, relevant authorities were provided with a process that enabled them to develop an implementable management scheme. The learning provided by Stakeholder Dialogue addressed the relevant authorities' reasons for adopting the participatory approach and was therefore highly valued by those officers who participated. The match between learning and reasons for participating is explained by returning to the early influence of the management group and their role in setting the objectives for the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops.

Although many relevant authority stakeholders do comment on how they learnt from their participation there are exceptions who highlight the variable value of the process as a learning experience. The representative from Dover District Council, a relevant authority with a peripheral role in managing the European marine site, acknowledges that while he had learnt some "simply factual stuff" from the workshops he also said "it's not changed my life." Although he had participated in three workshops he learnt very little that had any bearing on his responsibilities as a Dover District Council officer.

Amongst the non-relevant authorities stakeholders, where there is greater variety in reasons for participation and knowledge of Thanet, there is greater variation in the learning participants gained from their participation. In some cases the workshops provided a first introduction to English Nature and for many participants the process raised their awareness of the conservation importance attached to the Thanet coastline. The diving club representative said he "didn't know there was such a thing as EN until these workshops", while a Broadstairs town councillor saw it:

> "as a wonderful opportunity to be involved in something, I'm particularly interested in conservation and nature and of course I did learn a lot about the coast line that I didn't know about already."

In a written response to the evaluation the representative from Thanet Waste Reduction and Resourcefulness Group described the participatory approach as an "excellent way

to gain an idea of peoples views and concerns.[49]" A number of other stakeholders offered similar descriptions of the process as a valuable opportunity to hear other opinions and ideas.

However, there were other participants who felt the workshops offered them only limited opportunity to learn. The CPRE representative commented on how the workshop design prevented him from often hearing the views of groups he would not normally meet. Instead he said:

> "I think a slight problem with the entire process was that they, the organisers, split us all up into various groups, experts, pressure groups and so on, so I found myself in a group of experts, all of whom I know, so it was a bit like an old boys club, we all knew each other anyway, and I never spoke to the fishermen, for example."

This is an interesting point and contrasts with earlier frustrations described by some participants who felt the workshop design restricted their contributions by placing them in small *heterogeneous* discussion groups. The comments from the CPRE representative should be seen as part of a bigger critical perspective of the Stakeholder Dialogue approach that is partly informed by a sense of loss of influence. He regarded CPRE as a key player in traditional conservation decision-making processes where they operated "along the lines of a quiet word in ears." As a participant in a large and inclusionary process this traditional position of influence is significantly diluted.

Another participant, a local geologist, who was largely positive about the participatory approach, described the learning he gained as ephemeral and very much context dependent:

> "I'm sitting here thinking well what can I actually say I physically learnt and it's not very much, it's all sort of undertones. It's things that might be prompted when you're in that particular situation, and you go oh yeah I remember that, I know something about that. Sitting out of that particular environment it's almost impossible..."

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[49] See Appendix N for a copy of this response and a letter from the representative of Margate Hoteliers Association following their participation in the workshops.

Despite the majority of non-relevant authority participants indicating that the Stakeholder Dialogue process raised their awareness of a range of issues, there are a number that are reluctant to attach any significant value to what they learnt. For instance, although the representative from the hotel association acknowledged she learnt about the coastline this was not why she had chosen to participate and was not something of importance to the organisation she represented.

In addition to learning about the conservation value of the coast the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops introduced participants to the different organisations, activities and individuals with an interest in the area. The results indicate that such learning plays an important role in shaping the relationships that emerge from the Stakeholder Dialogue process.

7.4.4.2 Theme: *Relationships*

The *Relationships* theme describes a complicated and varied result of the participatory process and the learning opportunities it offered. An early trigger for this variety can be traced back to the inclusionary drive of Stakeholder Dialogue that ensured the workshops engaged with the numerous existing relationships between invited stakeholders. The participatory process then provided a space in which these relationships could evolve in response to the emphasis on transparent communication. Open coding allowed the analysis to identify three broad macro-relationships, from within the multifarious comments made by individual stakeholders. The first of these captures the changes between relevant authorities, and between Thanet District Council and English Nature in particular. The second describes the resulting relationships between relevant and non-relevant authorities stakeholders, while the last summarises the impact the workshops had on relationships amongst non-relevant authority stakeholders.

Representatives from relevant authorities, other than those from English Nature and Thanet District Council, offer little indication that the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops significantly shifted their relationships. One of the key reasons for this was the fact that many already had established working relationships before the workshops started. A culture of partnership working was well developed between many of the relevant

authority participants who were involved. The representative from the Environment Agency questions the influence of the participatory approach in strengthening existing relationships, saying that:

> "I suppose my changes have really been through the management group, yeah obviously I got to know people on the management group, That would have happened...anyway, because the management group would have met anyway."

The management group allowed this stakeholder to cement old relationships and develop new ones outside of the participatory space.

However, while there is little evidence of the workshops significantly impacting on the majority of existing inter-relevant authority relationships there is an apparent positive shift with regard to Thanet District Council based associations. The Countryside Officer from Dover District Council echoes comments from the equivalent representative at Kent County Council when he describes a more constructive relationship with TDC.

> "It is more constructive [relationship with TDC].....largely because Thanet switched from being rather negative to getting on board with the scheme of management, there is positive working arising from that."

The shift in relationships around Thanet District Council is dominated by that between English Nature and the Council. The Stakeholder Dialogue approach was largely a response to the historical collapse of constructive working relations between the two relevant authorities. There is a strong sense from the interviews with participants from both organisations that their relationship had improved following Stakeholder Dialogue and management scheme launch. However, perceptions of how strong this improvement is varies from participant to participant and between organisations. There is also an important distinction between the shift in relations between those individuals who participated and the organisations they represent. Of particular importance is the gap between Council Officer and Council Member. Councillor Gore refers to this when asked to identify potential relationship changes between participating organisations.

> "I think we have to try and look at it from two angles. There is the officer angle where they all know each other, there is the council angle where councillors tend to see each other less..."

With this in mind, participating officers from both Thanet District Council and English Nature describe an improvement in working relations, for instance one planning officer says of the relationship:

> "I think it is much stronger than it was, I think there was a point where our working relationship with English Nature was at a very low ebb...I think the fact that because this process has gone on.....I think there is a more sort of open way of discussing things."

Similar views are provided not only by the EN Project Officer who drove the participatory approach from the very beginning, but also by the new Conservation Officer for the Thanet area. The new conservation officer arrived in post on 2002 having had no involvement in the four Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. While her positive working relationship with Thanet District Council provides some indication that new relationships extend beyond the influential English Nature Project Officer, it is unclear how far they permeate into the Regional English Nature office. At the same time a number of Thanet District Council officers suggested that the new relationship is fragile and could be challenged in the future. For instance, asked if he thought the relationship had improved following the workshops one planning officer said:

> "I think so, yes. But I think that's something that's going to need to be kept nurtured, to be honest because I think there's always the possibility that it could lapse back into the old style, conflicting. I think the Turner Centre is obviously going to be one to test the strength of it. So we'll see."

The proposed Turner Centre provides the evaluation with an opportunity to assess the post Stakeholder Dialogue working relations between Thanet District Council and English Nature. The site chosen by Thanet District Council for the art centre, shortly after the launch of the European Marine site management scheme, extended into the designated site and over important roost sites for internationally important populations of turnstones. The selection of this architectural design over five other short-listed options was a statement of economic intent from Thanet District Council. The Director of Planning described the design as "better by a mile" than any of the others and dismissed the encroachment into SAC, saying that "oh, it will be a problem because

English Nature will make it a problem, we know it is going to be a problem in fact." The selection and presentation of the proposed site by Thanet District Council to English Nature showed little evidence of better understanding or communication on their part. Instead, as the current EN conservation officer says, the site had been chosen and it was going to happen come what may.

> "The first we heard about any of it was that she [outgoing project officer] was invited to go to the presentation by the architects, when they won the competition. The first thing we knew about it, it was plonked in the middle of the SAC, so yeah. That wasn't good, that wasn't a good moment, basically he [Director of Planning] wanted it to happen and he'll find a way."

Despite this confrontational introduction to the Turner Centre and the problems it posed for maintaining populations of important migratory birds, the issues were amicably resolved for both parties. English Nature's open and deliberative approach, led by the outgoing Project Officer and the new Conservation Officer, ensured a positive dialogue was soon established. The outgoing Project Officer recalls a friendly series of meetings, rich in 'banter' and jokes from both sides:

> I was in meetings with [redacted] from harbours and [redacted] and all the people who've been involved in the management scheme, and I'd walk up and there'd instantly be a bit of joking and bantering, and at meetings with [redacted] he'd joke to me and said 'Oh Diana I had great roast turnstone for my Sunday dinner', and I'd say to him 'well you must be half starved then because there can't have been much meat on it they're so stressed round here'."

Although the English Nature officer effectively established this atmosphere by opening up discussions, which had previously been heading down the public inquiry route, she had only been able to do so because of the better understanding and lines of communication left behind by the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops. Even the Director of Planning was happy to acknowledge that he "can pick up the phone and talk to people from EN actually on a very friendly basis."

However, tying this positive shift in working relations to the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops is challenged on two accounts, firstly by Thanet District Council's limited commitment (the Director of Planning only attended one and a half workshops) to the participatory approach, and secondly by the fact the workshops were not designed specifically to address the relations between the two organisations. A great deal of the

communication between TDC and EN took place outside of the participatory space, either before the workshops took place or between the participatory events.

Relationships between relevant authorities and the local organisations that participated show considerable variation following the workshops. Many relevant authority staff are unable to describe any significant changes in relationships because of their limited contact with local stakeholders. For many the workshops were the first and only occasion they had met individuals from Thanet interest groups. Nevertheless, there is a strong perception among participants from some relevant authorities that they have improved their standing in the interested local community. For instance a TDC planning officer predicts the Council:

> "..probably benefited from it in a sort of image sense, in that the council has had moments of unpopularity over the years, and I think the fact that we were sort of openly inviting people to come along and share their views in an open forum has probably helped from that point of view."

However, while the occasional stakeholder may back this up there are also many who fail to describe TDC in a positive light. For instance the Cliff Ends Residents Association president said:

> "..personally I think they're awful, I really do. I think they're a dreadful council and everything they've touched seems to have gone wrong."

Another participant, representing a sailing club, said "the less said [about TDC] the better in a way." It is clear that the Stakeholder Dialogue workshops served to reinforce some existing perceptions of TDC. An explanation for this can found in the lack of process independence coupled with the failure to effectively manage and deliver on the expectations participants brought to the process. This same combination of influences served to shape some participants' perceptions of English Nature. This is especially true amongst those who entered the process motivated by reasons other than coastal conservation. Failure to deliver on these expectations and the launch of the management scheme ensured that a number of local participants maintained a negative perception of English Nature.

One participant was happy to describe an improved relationship with officers from Thanet District Council. A local geologist, who had been quite critical of TDC's recent history, now speaks of a much more positive relationship with a number of officers, although he is reluctant to attribute this directly to the workshops. Similarly, there are participants who are happy to describe English Nature in a better light. The Cliff Ends Residents Association president thought the participatory approach allowed her to get a better understanding of the organisation and to see it as made up of individuals whom she met rather than a distant office.

> "I think perhaps it gave EN a better image, a more positive image, you see it as something, a living, moving organisation rather than just something that's an office as it were. So I think perhaps EN in my opinion have come out of it a little better than they were before."

Relationships between non-relevant authority stakeholders are perhaps the least changed as a result of the workshops. Although participants often acknowledge they enjoyed meeting people and learning about the different activities along the coastline only three say they have any more contact with organisations following the workshops. The response from the representative of Kent Land-sailing is typical of what many other stakeholders described. Asked if his involvement in the workshops had changed his relationship with any other participants he said:

> "Not at all, because previous to the workshop I hadn't really had any interaction with other stakeholders that I was aware of being there, and subsequently the same. We just met up on the four occasions, they [stakeholders] were drawn from a diverse range of organisations."

The suggestion is that the Stakeholder Dialogue process did not establish relationships between local organisations where there was not already a need for communication. The inclusionary process brought together people of very different interests, once the process was over they had little reason to continue to communicate.

7.4.5 Theme: *Coastal Action Plan (CAP)*

Along with the management scheme the Stakeholder Dialogue process was intended to produce a Coastal Action Plan that would "bring about the implementation of the collaboratively agreed activities and actions, which fall outside the management

scheme" (Pound 1999:5). Three years after the launch of the management scheme there is still no sign of a Coastal Action Plan. During the workshops the CAP became subsumed within the Marine Park suggestion. Thanet District Council officers introduced the Marine Park idea as a marketing tool that would allow them to get behind the ideas of green tourism and conservation management emerging from the workshops. However, other than a short reference in the Local Plan, the restoration of coastal signs and a coastal bike route, there is little evidence of the Marine Park initiative being implemented. The Director of Planning at TDC acknowledged that responsibility for this lay with the Council and explained the delay by referring to internal restructuring of the marketing department. On the other hand, the Director of Tourism and Leisure implied the responsibility lay with the new jointly funded coastal project officer and that his priorities had been defined by English Nature. Asked what progress had been made on the Marine Park he said:

> "probably not a huge amount. Because I suppose the agreement with English Nature is the development of the codes of practice.....That's an agreed priority, not because the other isn't important, because that's what they really want out of it."

It is clear, from both the lack of common understanding within TDC regarding the aims of the Marine Park and the absence of any implementation, that there is insufficient commitment within the council to deliver either the CAP or the Marine Park. The absence of these substantive products contradicts the content of discussions within the workshops and means that not all the original aims were met. It is this contradiction that acts as a trigger for many of the frustrations and disappointments stakeholders describe.

7.4.6 Theme: *Frustrations and disappointments*

For a number of stakeholders their participation in the workshops, coupled with the products that followed, left them with a sense of frustration and disappointment. Although the analysis identifies multiple explanations for this legacy many of these can be shown to stem from a combination of the large number of different expectations entering the workshops and the gap between process and products.

Few stakeholders refer directly to a sense of frustration; instead it is often implied through the course of an interview or when asked to describe their willingness to participate in future participatory events. The immediate cause of the frustration experienced by some participants can be traced back either to a feature of the workshops or to the results that followed. The following discussion takes each of these in turn and introduces the various different influences.

Just as the Stakeholder Dialogue process delivers intangible benefits so the mechanics of the participatory workshops also generate frustration amongst participants. For instance, the absence of key decision makers within the Council was a source of frustration for the CPRE representative. In a similar vein the apparent lack of influence during the workshops led to clear frustration amongst some stakeholders, a reaction that is clearly amplified by the presentation of the workshops as an opportunity to influence decision-making. The Kent Land sailing club stakeholder summed up this sense of frustration when he said:

> "I thought the aim of the workshop was to get the local stakeholders, interested people involved in the decision making process, have an active part in it. After the event I felt that the idea was to get them to endorse a lot of decisions that had already been made."

Similar comments were made by representatives from other local groups, such as the Hotel Association and the Residents Associations. The apparent frustrations tied to the facilitated and controlled opportunities for contribution were added to by the content of discussions. A number of participants describe the dialogue as being confusing to the layman. The conservation focus introduced a technical language that many participants were unfamiliar with. The frustration arising from this confusion is a response to the inequalities introduced through the exclusive technical language. Just as managed dialogue may limit opportunities for contribution, so can the content of discussions. Other participants described their frustration at some of the issues participants raised during the workshops. There is a sense that in allowing participants to introduce all their concerns, the subject matters moves away from the initial remit and time is wasted. Relevant authority officers commented on how they were sometimes frustrated by the fact that discussions often went over subjects that were already familiar and well understood. For instance the Director of Tourism and Leisure at TDC said:

> "...there is perhaps a frustration at times that you have to go through this process of having to sell your arguments to people and getting their views back where you think. 'hang on, I could have just written that'... In fact what we're doing is almost going over ground again that we went over 2 years ago."

For some participants the step from process to products serves to reinforce their workshop-based frustrations while for others the gap between the two leaves them with a sense of disappointment. Having been led to believe that her interest in Pegwell Bay and the hover port site fitted within the scope of the '*Thanet – an asset for all*' workshops, the final products of the workshops led the representative of Cliffs End Residents Association to conclude:

> " I think I was a bit pie in the sky thinking it would make any difference to my particular interest."

The lack of relevant substantive products is behind many similar suggestions of disappointment or frustration. Although many non-relevant authority participants are happy to acknowledge they met new people and learnt from their involvement, in the absence of more substantive benefits these intangible benefits are insufficient return on their participation. A local geologist emphasised the value of substantive changes when he said:

> "You've got the paper work now, you've got one person in position, but from my point of view and others I have spoken to they need more tangible evidence on the ground of something...I would say at the moment the groups or the interested people who took part have not yet benefited anything like their aspirations require."

The failure to deliver on the economic/regeneration agenda that motivated a number of participants ensured they did not recognise any substantive benefits from the workshops. The resulting disappointment is heightened by the economic content of the workshops and the confirmation of expectations this initially offered the participants.

The contradiction between process content and products is not exclusive to those participants representing economic interests. A local geologist with a strong commitment to the conservation agenda commented on how the emphasis given to

birds in the draft management scheme was not always a fair representation of the priority placed on them by participants in the workshops.

> "I did feel, and I know it is something that a lot of other people felt, the word tern and turnstone kept popping up and the focus was shifted very strongly towards birds.....That's what I felt as an ordinary lay person, that the input from the workshop was being slightly skewed when it got back to the [EN] office. I'm sure a lot of people had bird interests, but not as strong as was being shown in the drafts."

This is a clear example of how the legislative driver behind the process shaped the outcomes, and in doing so contributed to the frustrations felt by some participants.

7.5 Summary[50]

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the developmental history behind the products of a Stakeholder Dialogue case. By doing so it has been able to identify how features of Stakeholder Dialogue combine with a suite of contextual influences to generate considerable variation in the experiences of different stakeholders. Analysis of this variation highlights a significant division between the experiences of those stakeholders who represented relevant authorities and those that did not. Explanations for this difference and the wider variation between stakeholders have their roots in the inclusionary agenda. This principle ensures the process engages with a large number of unknown contexts, histories, expectations, hopes and understandings. This 'baggage' that stakeholders bring to the workshop interacts with the process and its immediate context to determine how and what participants contribute.

The Stakeholder Dialogue process successfully delivered the statutory requirement for a management scheme; this is a significant success in light of the history of debate and objections. However, experience of less tangible benefits is very variable across the different participants and is the result of a series of factors. Principal amongst these is the satisfaction of an individual's instrumental aims. In addition to the fact that the process did not have an equal understanding of the aims each stakeholder came with,

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[50] See Appendix O for a summary of the evaluation comments made by participants at the end of Workshop 4 (Pound & 1996).

the statutory boundary combined with the commitment of the key decision makers to act as a sieve that limited the delivery of instrumental products. This process often contradicted the inclusionary and deliberative nature of the process and provides an explanation for the disappointment some participants describe.

The following chapter adds to the learning from this rich case study by providing the evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue with a second opportunity to explore the influence key features of process have in determining its effectiveness.

Chapter 8

Process learning from a different perspective:
Exploring the alternative in the Wash and North Norfolk

Introduction

In recognition of the inherent challenge in separating the influence of process from context the evaluation adapts elements of a Quasi-experimental Design (QED)[50]. This original approach to the assessment of participation provides the thesis with a learning opportunity over and above that offered by a single case study methodology. Through careful selection of a secondary study area[51] the evaluation is offered the means to better understand the role of two key components of Stakeholder Dialogue: the flat decision-making structure and the use of facilitators. This secondary case resembles the principal case as closely as possible, but did not employ independent facilitators nor did it adopt a flat decision-making structure. This methodology offers the evaluation the most appropriate and practical means of going beyond simply describing how effective Stakeholder Dialogue is, to suggesting possible reasons for the products identified in Chapter 7.

This chapter is organised into four sections. The first of these presents a justification for the selection of the North Norfolk and Wash SAC as the secondary case. Following on from this the chapter offers a detailed description of the participatory process that developed the management scheme for this marine SAC and reviews the context this was situated in. The third section details the fieldwork and the focused process of analysis. Finally, the chapter concludes by exploring how the products of the process were shaped by the hierarchical decision-making structure and in the absence of independent facilitation. These results offer the evaluation a second opportunity,

[50] The evaluation strategy is built around the framework suggested by the traditional QED. However, it rejects the reductionist notion within the program evaluation literature that this method offers the means to define the net effects of a particular case. Instead, the approach is seen to offer the best means, with the resources available, of learning how key features of the Stakeholder Dialogue process help to shape the products.

[51] Rather than presenting the equivalent analysis of a second case study as Chapters 6 & 7 describe for Thanet, Chapter 8 offers a more focused analysis, directed by the learning from Chapters 6 & 7 and the overarching aim of evaluating Stakeholder Dialogue. As a result the North Norfolk participatory process and results described in this chapter should be seen as a secondary study, intended to enhance the learning from the Thanet case rather than establish a comparative measure of success or effectiveness.

beyond that provided by the Thanet case, to understand the influence of these key features in determining the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue.

8.1 Identifying the secondary case

The Natura 2000 network of marine SAC sites provides the thesis with a consistent institutional and statutory context that allows the evaluation to select a secondary case. This existing framework is supported by an earlier review of ten marine SAC sites by Jones *et al* (2001). This study provides descriptions of both the geographical and socio-economic context of each site and the process by which each management scheme was developed. From this review, and out of discussions with two of the authors, the north Norfolk coast and Wash SAC site emerged as the most suitable secondary study area. It is the most appropriate case in the context of this methodology and it offered the best opportunity to enhance the explanatory power of the evaluation strategy.

Having recognized that the Natura 2000 network offered a suitable framework from which to develop this evaluation strategy the thesis needed to identify an appropriate secondary case from the ten UK marine cSAC sites analysed by Jones *et al.* (2001). The selection of the secondary case is defined by a search for similarity. While acknowledging that the replication of the classic controlled laboratory experiment is unachievable, the evaluation sought to identify a second cSAC site that had similarities with the Thanet case. The Habitats Directive ensures the Wash and North Norfolk case has the same purpose and institutional context. This means key stakeholder organisations are common to both cases, for instance both the Environment Agency and English Nature play important roles in both cases. The Habitats Directive itself is an important commonality, ensuring both cases are bound by the same legislative framework. The high recreational value placed on large stretches of the coast ensures similar activity groups are to be found in each case. Importantly the review by Jones *et al.* (2001) identifies a number of key similarities, relative to the variation found within the fifteen cSAC sites. Both sites cover long stretches of coastline and are bordered by large populations. They both have large numbers of relevant authorities in comparison to other sites and are characterised by a history of debate over coastal management and growing pressures on the designated area. This report also described how both

participatory processes left behind improved levels of social capital between stakeholders despite originating in environments defined by their low social capital (Jones *et al.* 2001).

While there are important similarities between the Thanet and North Norfolk and Wash sites there are also important differences in the processes used to produce the management schemes. These differences allow the evaluation to gain a better understanding of how features of Stakeholder Dialogue determine the products it produces. The participatory process that produced the management scheme for the Wash and North Norfolk followed the template suggested by the DETR; importantly this describes a process without facilitators and based on advisory groups feeding information into a management group of relevant authorities. This is in strict contrast to Stakeholder Dialogue, which, despite its variation in practice, always employs facilitation and strives to establish a flat decision-making structure that allows all stakeholders to share in deliberations.

Pragmatic considerations were also important in selecting the second case study. In the case of the Wash and North Norfolk site there was a positive and encouraging response from both the English Nature Project Officer and the Chairman of the full management group. The support of both these stakeholders was necessary to ensure the evaluation had access to other participants and to the literature associated with the case.

8.2 The Wash and North Norfolk Coast

8.2.1 Geographical Context

The Wash and North Norfolk site (known as the European Marine Site, EMS) covers a vast area of coastline running from Lincolnshire down to Norfolk, a total of over 100 miles and covering an area of 107761 ha. It is possible to identify two distinct regions within this area. Dominating the western range of the site is the Wash; this stretches from Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire to Heacham in Norfolk. The Wash is the largest marine embayment in Britain, with the second largest expanse of intertidal sediment flats in the country (Mortimer 2002a). Moving East from the Wash the site embodies

the sandy barrier beach system of the north Norfolk coast from Heacham to Weybourne. Both areas of coastline are recognised for their high conservation value, with approximately 80% of the coastline falling under existing conservation designations. There are three Special Protection Areas (SPA), an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), six National Nature Reserves and a Ramsar site (Wash Estuary Strategy Group 1996). In October 1996 the Wash and North Norfolk coastline were submitted to the European Commission as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (Eastern Tides 1997). The area was recognised as being of importance for the following Annex 1 habitats[52] (Mortimer 2002b):

1. The large shallow inlet and bay defined by the Wash
2. Sandbanks which are largely covered by seawater all the time
3. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
4. Samphire (*Salicornia* spp.) communities
5. Atlantic saltmeadows
6. Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs
7. Biogenic reefs
8. Lagoons

Map 8.1: The North Norfolk and Wash coast

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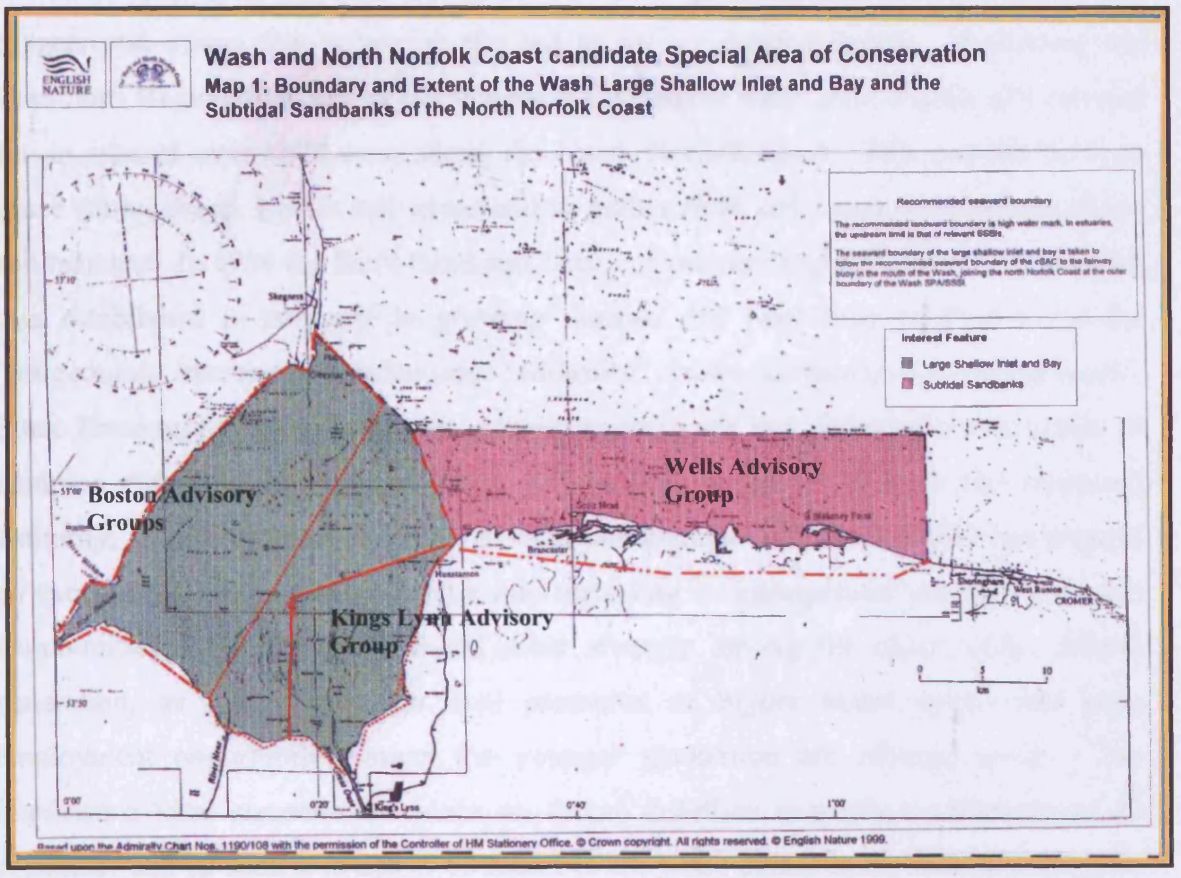
[52] Annex 1 habitats are listed in the Habitats Directive and are natural habitats of Community interest. Article 1 of the Directive defines the criteria used to select these habitat types.

Map 8.2 The Wash and North Norfolk cSAC designation boundary



8.2.2 Socio-economic context

The geographical dissimilarity between the Wash and the North Norfolk coast is marked by an almost equally abrupt division in the socio-economic features of the coastline. Map 8.1 shows how the North Norfolk coast is characterised by many small coastal towns and villages. Their immediacy to the coast plays an important role in defining their character and economy. There is a very strong tourist industry with large numbers of summer visitors and bird watchers in the winter. The Wash area does not have the same tourist appeal (Skegness is an exception) and its economy is defined by agriculture, the ports of Boston, Fosdyke, Sutton Bridge, Wisbeach and King's Lynn, and fishing. The fact that a significant proportion of the coastline has been reclaimed from the sea ensures that the main urban areas are some distance from the designated site. The huge arable farms of Lincolnshire and Norfolk dominate this coastal landscape, separating the few urban areas and establishing a seasonal employment cycle.

The communities of North Norfolk have forged very strong ties with the coastline. This can be seen today in the activities of the common rights holders, local fishermen, bait diggers and others that recognise the sea as an important resource. Following the Commons Registration Act in 1965, some 200 villagers were given Rights of Common for an area of over 6000 acres along the North Norfolk coast. This entitled them to graze cattle, sheep, horses and geese and to gather flora and fauna from the extensive salt marshes. In 1984 the Scolt Head and District Common Rights Holders' Association was established in response to growing tourism and what they referred to as the "burgeoning interest of institutional authority" (www.northcoastal.freeserve.co.uk). Since forming, the Association has actively campaigned and defended the activities of common rights holders and in doing so has become an established and respected authority. This very strong tradition of local involvement with the coastline has ensured an exceptionally high sense of ownership regarding its management amongst the local communities. This is to be found most strongly among the older, often retired, generation, as increasingly the dual pressures of higher house prices and poor employment opportunities mean the younger generation are moving away. The importance local communities place on the(ir) coastline is partly a reflection of its proximity and as such it is not to be found to the same extent in the towns around the Wash area.

8.2.3 Historical context to the Wash and North Norfolk study

There is a long and established history of nature conservation along the Norfolk and Lincolnshire coast. Associated with this has been an equally strong level of stakeholder involvement. Such involvement has arisen in response to growing pressures on the coastal resources and the willingness of user groups to commit their energies.

The Estuary Management Plan (EMP)[53] for the Wash pre-dates the SAC designation and provides a recent example of debate between local interests and national conservation bodies. A three-tier management structure was adopted that did not allow room for local input. The main challenge to the EMP came from wildfowling groups

[53] The Wash Estuary Management plan was launched in 1996. This is a non-statutory document aimed at securing the sustainable management of the area. This plan was developed according to traditional methods of making drafts available for public consultation. It did not actively engage with stakeholders.

who argued against the need for wildfowl refuges within the estuary. They challenged the evidence that refuges were required to sustain population numbers and strongly resented both the threat to their activity and the absence of any real opportunity to contribute their extensive understanding of the subject. Upon the arrival of the European Marine Site, concerns were raised that the use of refuges might become a statutory obligation. As a result the participatory process started out in an atmosphere severely lacking in trust between a key local group and national agencies.

Along the North Norfolk coast there has been a similar history of debate between local user groups and national conservation interests. In particular the Common Rights Holders have been vociferous in defending their right to continue their activities whenever they perceive them to be threatened by changes to coastal management. Proactive coastal realignment as a method of flood defence is an example of a longstanding issue between Common Rights Holders and national agencies such as the Environment Agency (see for example O'Riordan and Ward 1997, O'Riordan 2002). This established environment of debate and conflict between stakeholders throughout the Special Area of Conservation led Jones *et al.* (2001) to characterise the context in which the SAC management scheme was developed as having low social capital. However, it is important to recognise the different scales at which social capital can be described and the variation that exists between them. On a small scale the various user groups can be seen to show high levels of trust, interconnectedness or networks of communication, while at the same time exhibiting poor levels of trust and communication with national agencies. Although social capital can be shown to be high between national agencies such as English Nature and the Environment Agency, on the scale of the individual agency there may be real tensions between local, regional and national offices.

8.2.4 Stakeholder participation: a hierarchical approach

The process by which the management scheme was produced and the Regulation 33 Advice consulted on followed the template suggested in the Guide to the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 and to the Preparation and Application of Management schemes (page 16). Adopting this approach resulted in a two-tier

management structure. Fig 8.1 provides a schematic representation of the resulting management structure and identifies the role of non-relevant authority stakeholders.

During the summer of 1997 three Local Community Seminars were held at towns along the Wash and north Norfolk coast. The aim of these seminars was to introduce the new conservation designation to interested groups and individuals while also recruiting members for the proposed SAC advisory groups (Eastern Tides 1998). As a result three advisory groups were formed, centred around King's Lynn, Boston and Wells-next-the-Sea. These advisory groups consisted of local people and representatives of organisations with an interest in the SAC, such as the Wildfowlers' Associations, Fishermen's Associations, and marine conservation societies. Included among these local organisations were national bodies such as the RSPB. The role of the advisory groups was primarily to ensure the management scheme was comprehensive and accurate by providing information relating to local activities along the coast. In addition they provided advice to English Nature on the production of the Regulation 33 package. The advisory groups were given considerable autonomy within the management structure; they were self-governing with their own particular terms of reference. Having elected a Chairperson to represent them on the full management group the advisory groups had control over when they met, what they discussed and whether they invited representatives from the relevant authorities.

Rather than being independently facilitated advisory group meetings were run according to a more traditional format with the Chairperson responsible for ensuring that everybody was heard and that no single individual dominated proceedings.

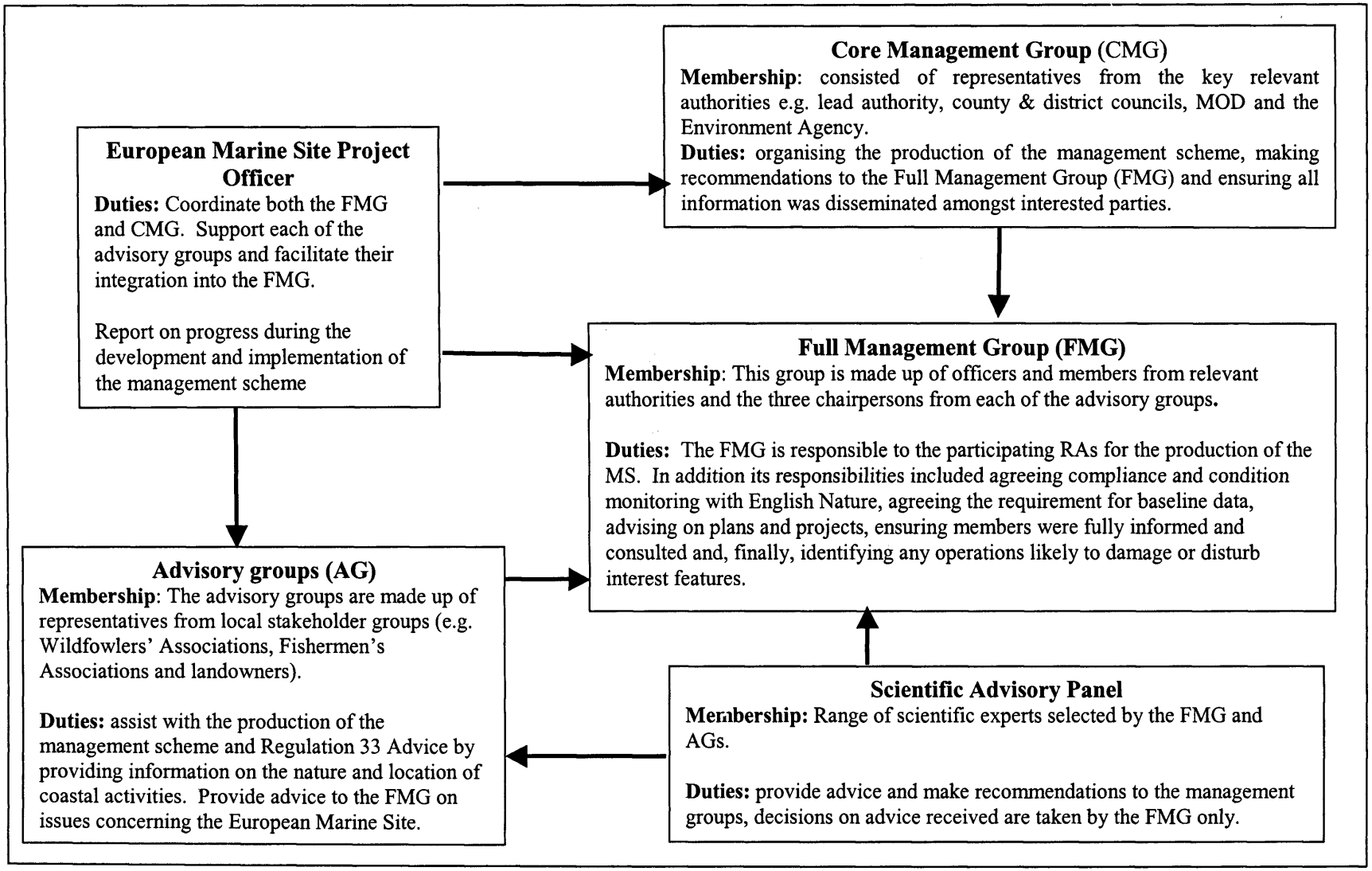
8.2.5 Timeline of key stages in the production of the cSAC Management scheme

In the timeline below I present the key stages involved in producing the management scheme for this SAC site.

- The Core Management Group was formed in October 1996. The Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee took the position of Lead Authority.

- Following this there were two workshops that introduced the various relevant authority staff and local authority members to their responsibilities under the Habitats Directive.
- In March 1997 the full management group met to discuss the establishment of the advisory groups. It was agreed that to ensure geographical coverage there should be three groups based at Boston, King's Lynn and Wells-next-the-Sea.
- During the summer of 1997 the first edition of the European Marine Site newsletter was published. Called *Eastern Tides*, this first edition went to great lengths to remove confusion and uncertainty regarding the new designations. It defined the many acronyms associated with conservation and explained the relationship the SAC would have to the recently completed Estuary Management Plan. It also explained the process by which the coastline had been designated as a cSAC site. Importantly it included articles written by a member of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Wildfowling club. It was during this time that the open meetings were held in order to establish the three advisory groups.
- In September 1997 the Core Management Group published a draft research strategy. This was intended to highlight areas where it was thought research was required in order to develop the management scheme. As had been the case previously the document highlighted the actions of wildfowlers who in turn, immediately saw it as mechanism to restrict their activities. The document was retracted and apologies given. A local RSPB officer was instrumental in restoring relations with the wildfowling community.
- The inaugural meetings of the advisory groups took place in April and May 1998.
- During the summer of 1998 English Nature's maritime team delayed the guidance on conservation objectives because of concerns with issues of national consistency.
- During the winter of 1998 the Regulation 33 package was delayed further. Draft conservation objectives were consulted on and then retracted by English Nature because the national guidance on conservation objectives was substantially altered.

Fig 8.1 Management Structure for the development of the Wash and North Norfolk Marine cSAC management scheme



- The formal public consultation on the Regulation 33 advice took place during the spring of 2000. 36 written responses were received, 33 of these were from local consultees. The Wells-next-the-Sea advisory group objected strongly to the content of the Regulation 33 advice, which they saw as threatening the traditional common rights practices many of them represented. To register their concern they organised a vote of no confidence in the Regulation 33 package. In response to this the Project Officer met the advisory group on a number of occasions to discuss the content of the Regulation 33. document. As a result of these meetings the advisory group were able to write a paragraph for the Regulation 33 advice that safeguarded the activities of common rights holders.
- Delivering the Regulation 33 document to an imposed timetable placed enormous pressure on the English Nature Project Officer. Having made assurances to the members of the advisory groups that they would be given adequate opportunity to comment on the draft Regulation 33 report, she found herself under pressure from the English Nature Maritime team in Peterborough to have the document signed off. This case was one of a number of SAC sites around the county that were funded by European LIFE funding. The time frame imposed by this external funding source, and managed by English Nature head office, threatened to undermine the burgeoning levels of support the Project Officer had developed with the local communities and eventually led to her resignation. As a result the process of producing the management scheme stalled until a new Project Officer was appointed five months later.
- In the winter of 2000 a first draft of the management scheme was produced. This allowed advisory groups and relevant authorities the opportunity to examine the document before it was put out for public consultation.
- Following the public consultation period the management scheme was launched in the autumn of 2001.

8.2.6 Key features of process

There are certain features of the participatory process that are not captured by Figure 8.1 or by the timeline above. These features emerged as the process evolved and give an

important insight into how the dialogue between relevant authorities and local stakeholders was progressed. Of particular importance were the actions of certain participants. On a number of occasions actions outside of the participatory forum, by key participants, ensured the process moved forward. During the debate over the content of the Regulation 33 advice a member of the Wells advisory group contacted a key figure within DEFRA and described the local tensions regarding this document. This served to raise the profile of the debate occurring in Norfolk and to increase the pressure bought about by the vote of no confidence. This is a good example of how the competence and experience of some stakeholders effectively drove the process forward. Another key personality in the process was the regional RSPB officer; he worked extremely hard to gain the trust of the wildfowling community and was successful in bringing them into the process. In the absence of any independent facilitator certain individuals emerged and drove the process forward. However, the means by which they did this – telephone calls, orchestrating votes and meeting small numbers of other stakeholders – occurred outside of the participatory process and as a result was neither transparent nor inclusionary.

The institutional background to this case played an important role in shaping the way this process developed. At a national level English Nature's failure to appreciate the strength of local feeling, especially on the North Norfolk coast, placed considerable demands on how the first Project Officer was able to engage with this community. The trust that the process had initially begun to develop suffered as a result and led to the Project Officer resigning.

Key to the successful rejuvenation of the process was the second Project Officer's commitment to progressing the dialogue with the advisory groups as transparently as possible. She held numerous face-to-face meetings with these groups and actively engaged them in the process of producing the management scheme (Mortimer 2002b). These techniques were driven by her personality rather than the structure of the participatory method.

8.3 Evaluation field work and analysis

The data collection process for this secondary case was based on the in-depth semi-structured interview method employed in Thanet[54]. An attempt was made to speak with participants from both the full management group and the advisory groups. Although the study was successful in doing this, access to members of the advisory groups was restricted and it proved particularly difficult to contact all members. Attempting to identify individuals that were not suggested by the respective chairmen reinforced this challenge; the chairmen were largely positive about the process and it was felt that simply following their direction may introduce a distorting bias to the data. In total sixteen interviews were carried out with fifteen different stakeholders. An initial scoping meeting was held with the Project Officer to ensure the interview schedule was appreciative of the context and relevant to the way the management scheme was developed. In addition to the interviews the study also collected relevant literature on the site, including the management scheme, Regulation 33 Advice and Estuary Management Plan.

Table 8.1 Interviews for the Wash and North Norfolk Coast

Interviewee	Organisation	Attended Full Management Group?	Attended Advisory Group meetings?	No. of interviews	Date of Interview
Diana Mortimer	English Nature	Yes	Yes	2	8/05/02 12/09/02
Helen Shardlow	English Nature	Yes	Yes	1	5/07/02
Chris Amos	Joint Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee	Yes as Chairman	No	1	12/07/02
Paul Fisher	RSPB	Yes	Yes	1	20/08/02

[54] See Appendix P for an example of the Interview Schedule used.

Graham King	Norfolk County Council	Yes	No	1	20/08/02
Godfrey Sayers	Wells-next-the-Sea advisory group	Yes	Yes: Wells AG Chairman	1	28/08/02
William Notton	Boston Wash Wildfowlers Association	No	Yes: Boston AG Chairman	1	28/08/02
Janice Howell	North Norfolk Common Rights Holders	Yes as representative of Common Rights Holders	Yes: Wells AG member	1	28/08/02
Michael Rooney	English Nature	Yes	Yes	1	29/08/02
Wendy Brooks	Environment Agency	Yes	No	1	6/09/02
Roger Ward	King's Lynn advisory group	Yes	Yes: King's Lynn AG Chairman	1	17/09/02
Tom Rowe	South Lincolnshire Environment Group	No	Yes: King's Lynn AG member	1	17/09/02
Richard & Kay Heath	Wildlife Trust	No	Yes: Boston AG member	1	11/10/02
Archie Saul	Drainage Board and landowner	Yes	Yes: Boston AG member	1	11/10/02
Peter Rushmer	MOD Estates	Yes	No	1	10/09/02

As with the Thanet evaluation, each interview transcript was analysed using the Atlas ti computer package introduced in Chapter 6. Like the Thanet evaluation, the data was analysed in an iterative process that involved studying each interview transcript a number of times before employing the Atlas ti tools. However, the analysis differed from the Thanet evaluation in that following an initial 'open' process of note taking and immersion in the data, the evaluation coded the interview transcripts according to the two areas of interest to the evaluation strategy. This meant the analysis sought to identify those participants' comments that related to either the hierarchical decision-making structure or the absence of an independent facilitator. With this focus in mind the analysis developed grounded codes that captured the variation in participants' experiences in relation to these themes.

8.4 Results

The interview analysis from the Wash and North Norfolk case uncovered valuable perspectives on how features of a participatory process shape the products. These results are presented below as an empirical statement. Results are organised under two headings that reflect the principal process differences between this study and the Thanet process. The first of these is titled Two-tier, and addresses those themes to emerge from the results that refer to the hierarchical structure and the gap this introduced between local stakeholder interests and relevant authority interests. The second broad theme is titled Self-functioning and contains those results that relate to the absence of a facilitator and the influence of the self-functioning role enjoyed by the advisory groups.

8.4.1 Two-tier

The comments from participants in both the advisory groups and full management group reveal a complicated picture which suggests that, while the two-tier approach offered the advisory groups the opportunity to contribute, the influence attached to this opportunity was largely dependent on the advisory group Chairman. The picture is further complicated by the fact that although the chairmen represent an apparently weak singular bridge between stakeholders and relevant authorities the gap between the two

lends the advisory group a powerful autonomy and identity. This self-governing characteristic of the advisory group offered the stakeholders a singular and powerful voice with which to challenge the full management group. Crudely, the use of advisory groups as a forum for local interests representation captured both strong and weak design features, a number of which contrast with the Stakeholder Dialogue approach. The following discussion takes these in turn and presents the comments from full management group members, advisory group Chairmen and advisory group members.

8.4.1.1 Theme: *Influence*

Although the interviews revealed variation in the level of influence participants thought the advisory group structure allowed them, the majority of stakeholders were able to provide examples of how they had contributed to either the Regulation 33 advice or the management scheme, or in some cases helped shape the participatory process. The English Nature Project Officer who oversaw the production of the management scheme credits the advisory groups with ensuring that it was accurate and comprehensive. She said that:

> "without them [the AGs] you would not have got the information you needed to make the management scheme totally holistic in its outlook."

It is worth bearing in mind that this comment comes from the Project Officer responsible for ensuring local interests were engaged in the process and as such it may emphasise the influence the advisory groups had over the content of the management scheme. However, there is evidence of the advisory groups contributing to the content of the management scheme. The extent to which this influence is recognised by participating stakeholders varies according to their level of involvement.

The initial participation that led to the Regulation 33 document established the influence and importance of the advisory groups. The Chairman of one advisory group describes how they successfully challenged English Nature on the time frame for the Regulation 33 package that effectively removed any opportunity for local consultation.

> "We said we are not prepared to accept this, we need the timetable extending, and we need a proper period where local people can grapple with problems of what Reg. 33 may mean to them."

The advisory groups went on to contribute a significant paragraph to the Regulation 33 document that defended the continued sustainable coastal harvesting activities of individuals along the Wash and North Norfolk coast. In a telling indication of advisory group influence, the challenge to the imposed timetable also led the full management group to successfully ask English Nature to apply for an extension from the European Commission.

Despite the substantive evidence that the advisory groups did influence both the management scheme and the Regulation 33 Advice it is also clear that not all advisory group members felt the process allowed them any real influence. A landowner from the Wash area commented on the gap between the AG and the FMG saying that:

> "what came out of the Boston meeting was not represented at the full management group meeting; there was a gap between the two."

Other stakeholders described how the advisory group itself served to diminish their influence by rejecting contributions and ensuring their concerns did not reach the full management group. The representative from the local Wildlife Trust was frustrated when his concerns regarding the contamination of the Wash estuary by the Ministry Of Defence's bombing range "were shot down in flames" by the rest of the advisory group. He went on to describe the process of persuasion that existed within the advisory group:

> "Oh yeah I think my interests were always listened to but if they didn't receive any support, you pushed your point, but then if it didn't get any support well that was it."

Although he clearly felt his influence on the FMG was moderated by the role played by the advisory group, he went on to say that he felt that it was appropriate to leave the communication between the two groups to the Chairman and that he "didn't think it would have helped" to speak directly with the various relevant authorities.

An interesting contradiction emerges from the interview analysis that shows the gap between the advisory group and full management group providing, not only an explanation for the influence the advisory group enjoyed, but also the reason for the frustration described by some stakeholders. The following theme explores this contradiction and the tensions that emerge from establishing autonomous stakeholder groups.

8.4.1.2 **Theme**: *Autonomy*

Each advisory group was given considerable individual autonomy. They drew up their own terms of reference and elected their own Chairperson. They decided when they would meet and whether they needed to invite representatives from the various relevant authorities. Although the subject and direction of advisory group meetings were defined by the imposed timetable the advisory groups were able to determine the priority and order of points on the agenda. Collectively these different factors helped to establish each advisory group as a self-governing autonomous organisation of stakeholders. This was supported by the decision to provide each of the advisory groups with support in kind in the form of meeting rooms, postage, secretarial assistance and similar. Three local authorities offered this assistance to each of the respective advisory groups. The advisory groups acknowledged the opportunity presented by the two-tier approach and the control it offered them. The local RSPB representative who sat on two advisory groups described the response from local stakeholders:

> "....they said 'right we've got a place at the table now, we've got something to offer'. They were saying 'we've got a lot to offer, and it looks like people will listen to what we say, lets define our own constitution, our own role, let's say what we think we can do and tell the management group' and so they were empowered and took it very seriously."

The autonomy offered by the process design, along with the recognition from relevant authorities, provided the advisory groups with a powerful base from which they could influence the management scheme and Regulation 33 advice. One example of this

influence is seen in the inclusion of a paragraph, first drafted by the advisory groups, in the final Regulation 33 conservation advice. As the English Nature officer confirms:

> "...they wrote a key paragraph relating to the longshore economy[55], they wrote that section."

They were able to do this for a variety of reasons. Firstly, by allowing them to determine the focus of the advisory group meetings the process ensured it was possible for local stakeholders to plan and prepare a challenge to the Regulation 33 package. Knowing the subject for each proposed meeting allowed the advisory groups an opportunity that would have been denied to them if they had not had control over content. In addition to this the Chairs of each advisory group met and arranged a joint advisory group meeting, something that would not have been possible if the stakeholders had simply been part of a predetermined process. These two features of the participatory design – control over when to meet and the opportunity to define the focus of discussions – empowered the advisory groups and offered them the means to influence the management of the coastline. This influence was reinforced by the gap separating the full management groups from the advisory groups that allowed the AGs the chance to establish their own identity and develop their own power base. An advisory group was able to form an agreement regarding a particular issue and then take it to the full management group. This common message from local stakeholders proved to be an influential means of communicating with the relevant authorities, presenting a clear statement backed up by collective support.

While there is the risk that such autonomy and separation from the full management group may 'distance' the advisory groups' thinking, there is little evidence to suggest this was the case. Meetings were guided by the Chairpersons who were in regular contact with the Project Officer. In addition to this, there was a general common understanding among participants that the purpose of this process was tied to the new conservation designation and the need to establish appropriate management practices.

[55] The longshore economy is a term first coined by the chair of Wells advisory group; it represents the various different harvesting activities practised by communities along the north Norfolk coast for generations.

In other words, a common appreciation of purpose reduced the range of understandings and expectations within this process.

Further evidence regarding the influence of the advisory groups and the commitment they engendered amongst local stakeholders is to be found in their determination to play a part in the implementation of the management scheme. All of the advisory groups have continued to meet, albeit not so frequently, and two in particular have voiced their desire to play a part in the planning process along the SAC coastline. However, it is here that the interviews reveal emerging tensions between the relevant authority officers and members of local advisory groups. Relevant authority officers are resistant to the suggestion from the advisory groups that they be 'plugged in' to the planning process, arguing that not only are they not statutory consultees but also that it would make an already slow process even slower. The representative from Norfolk County Council offered an example of this perspective when he said:

> "One thing the local Wells group seemed to be interested in was planning issues, well that's not something I want to get involved with, and as a relevant authority for the SAC I'm not interested in using this mechanism for dealing with that problem. As far as I'm concerned by and large it is a District Council matter, there are channels established for people to make their comments known."

The Environment Agency representative offered similar comments; both of these officers were otherwise very positive about the role of the advisory groups and their contributions to the process. This tension between the two tiers of stakeholders is a product of the influence the advisory groups enjoyed during the process coupled with the strong sense of identity born from the two-year participatory process. Viewed in this way it becomes possible to identify the risks associated with the advisory group approach. There is a sense in which each advisory group comes to represent a tight epistemic community that establishes a power base that was neither intended nor always appropriate.

Sub-theme: *Bridging the gap*

Despite the influence offered by the autonomous nature of the advisory groups the gap separating local stakeholders from the full management group is at the root of the

frustrations described by some advisory group members. In particular some interviewees expressed concern at the effectiveness of the Chairman as a bridge between the two levels of participants. The participants to express these concerns were always members of the advisory groups; representatives from the relevant authorities were unanimous in their belief that the Chairman represented the best means of communicating with the local interested communities. For instance the English Nature Project Officer said that the full management group was:

> "a good forum for bringing the advisory groups in through the chair people, because the chair people were willing to stand up and be counted, so that worked quite well. There was a proper two-way exchange of information."

However, the evaluation interviews revealed this reliance on the Chairperson as being somewhat misplaced, especially given that the Chair of one advisory group described how he could only attend two full management group meetings:

> "..the chairmen of the advisory groups were able to attend the management group, however, the management group always met within working hours, which for me was just a dead loss."

Interestingly, the two stakeholders interviewed from this particular advisory group were unaware that they were not always represented at the full management group meetings although their comment that it was "difficult to say" how much influence they had is perhaps an indication of the gap they recognised between their comments and the FMG. The irregular representation of their comments and those of other members of this advisory group highlights the dependence the two-tier structure places on the selection of an appropriate Chairperson. This is a role that places great demands on the particular individual, requiring them to be local *animators*, motivating and encouraging local participation and commitment to the process, while at the same time having to ally themselves closely with the very organisations found wanting by local interests. The influence of personalities rises to the fore within the two-tier approach to compete with the actual process design as the key determinant of influence. This was recognised by the English Nature project officer who commented that:

> "the thing about our [advisory] groups was the Chairmen were key. We were lucky in that they were respected local individuals. So the people involved were happy to have them as chairmen."

The reliance on the Chairman as a bridge between the two tiers of stakeholders was reinforced by the failure of many relevant authority stakeholders to attend advisory group meetings. While the English Nature Project Officer was present at each meeting, representatives from other relevant authorities either were not invited by the advisory groups or did not seek to attend. The result is that the process was perceived to be driven by English Nature and that many of the other relevant authorities were unaware of the tensions within the advisory groups regarding the Regulation 33 advice.

Transparency and effective contribution were further eroded by the responsibility placed on the Chairmen to feed back all the comments raised by stakeholders in the advisory group meetings. Although they are often described as being committed and prepared to "stand up and be counted" they inevitably acted as a sieve to the comments and concerns from local stakeholders. For the full management group this meant the Chairmen offered an efficient way of hearing relevant contributions, a point that was recognised by the Environment Agency representative who said:

> "I felt the Chairmen were very good because they didn't come with those other concerns."

However, this selective reporting of advisory group members' comments not only further dilutes the influence of local stakeholders but also acts to undermine their time and participation in the process. Few participants were aware of this though as they were not invited to attend the FMG[56].

8.4.2 Self-functioning

The Wash and North Norfolk participatory process delivered a widely accepted and implementable management scheme. It did this without the use of expert independent

[56] Although advisory group participants did not attend FMG meetings they were provided with minutes of meetings that would have told them whether their concerns had been introduced.

facilitators, and against a background of conflict and low social capital. In establishing self-functioning advisory groups the process design emphasised autonomy over facilitation, and as a result ensured the project budget did not have to be stretched to meet the costs of independent participatory experts. However, in doing so the participatory design omitted the established means of ensuring the dialogue was transparent, inclusionary and free from special interest capture, allowing it to be left open to accusations of manipulation. The focused analysis of interviews allows the evaluation an insight into the effectiveness of a stakeholder participatory process in the absence of expert facilitation. The following set of results explores two strong themes to emerge from this analysis. The first of these relates to the resistance amongst some stakeholders to the use of facilitators, while the second describes those comments that suggest the process of participation did suffer in the absence of facilitation.

8.4.2.1 Theme: *Resistance to facilitation*

There was a strong sense from a number of influential stakeholders that they thought the introduction of an independent, and therefore non-local, facilitator would have been to the detriment of the process and weakened the influence of the advisory groups. It is interesting to note that this suggestion comes from those stakeholders with existing influence and as such might be expressing a concern that a facilitator would effectively reduce their authority by 'levelling the playing field' across all participants. Stakeholders offer a number of different explanations for their reluctance to engage the services of independent facilitators. For instance the English Nature Project Officer spoke of how a 3rd party would have served as a barrier between her and the concerns of the local stakeholders. She argued that:

> "I don't think it would have helped to have a facilitator, in fact I think it helped [not to] because it allowed them [AG stakeholders] to get to me straight away, there wasn't a middle man there who could perhaps work with me before we go forward or manipulate things so when they came to me they were softer than they wanted them to be. One on one is best."

This is an interesting comment from the Project Officer as it situates her role in a challenging environment where, as she says, local stakeholders "want to shout at me".

It is clear that she regards this immediacy as an important element in ensuring the participatory process helps to build relationships between local interests and relevant authority staff. The facilitator's position as an intermediary prompted her to ask:

> "How does it [the participatory process] build up a relationship if there is somebody [else] there?"

The representative from the RSPB raised similar concerns, especially regarding the introduction of a 3rd party with limited understanding of the local context and without the local experience he felt was essential in order to establish trust amongst parties. He effectively dismissed the role of the independent facilitator by saying:

> "...to simply have some person parachuted in as it were, attached to the process, I find it difficult to see how that would actually work, because what it actually involves in my experience is infiltration. It is hard to see how such a person can demonstrate as easily as someone involved in the process themselves, firstly that it really means anything to them and secondly they are committed to finding a solution, the whole thing is just not subtle enough."

In this comment he argues against the independence claimed by facilitators, and instead highlights not only the importance of contextual understanding but also the need to provide evidence of context experience. However, it is worth bearing in mind that as the representative of the RSPB, one of the principal stakeholders throughout the SAC site and an organisation with considerable resources and expertise regarding the Habitats Directive, the self-functioning advisory group structure possibly offered him the opportunity to exert more influence than if it had been managed by a facilitator.

The Chairman of one advisory group defined his role as that of translator, providing both his advisory group and the full management group with explanations as to what each was saying to the other. This is a role that demanded both context knowledge and the trust of the local community he was speaking to, something he did not feel an introduced facilitator would be able to bring.

A final concern regarding the influence of a facilitator was voiced by the representative from the Environment Agency. Speaking from experience of other facilitated processes she had been involved in she argued that:

> "...facilitators take something away I think. It almost creates a dependence upon them, a sense of having to always get them back in a way because they [stakeholders] say, 'Oh we can't cope we have to have a facilitator'."

This suggestion that facilitation may leave a legacy of dependence amongst communities offers an interesting counter to the established argument that facilitated participatory processes are designed to empower stakeholders. Seen in this way the facilitator acts as a persistent and returning barrier to the development of true close working relationships between stakeholders; their presence acts to prevent them from actually delivering the goal that motivates them.

It is unclear what level of experience of facilitated processes the dissenting voices from the relevant authorities actually had. If they had not had any experience then their comments are an interesting indication of how facilitated processes might appear to established decision-makers. If they are speaking from experience then it is an important indication of the lasting influence a previous participatory event can leave.

In contrast to some of the comments from stakeholders involved in the Thanet case it is noticeable that none of the Wash & North Norfolk interviews contained accusations of manipulation or descriptions of strategic control. By ensuring the advisory groups were self-functioning the Wash & North Norfolk case removed one reason, as suggested by the Thanet case, for such accusations.

8.4.2.2 **Theme:** *Process capture*

Although none of the interviewed stakeholders identified a need for an independent facilitator a number of them described various degrees of process capture that occurred in the absence of a facilitator. Both the self-functioning advisory group and full management group were dependent on their respective Chairmen to ensure that no

particular interest group dominated proceedings at the expense of others. However, comments from one member of the full management group suggest this reliance was not sufficient. When asked to comment on the influence he felt he had as representative of the Drainage Board he said:

> "…. they are such powerful bodies, people like English Nature and the RSPB… they tend to hijack the whole thing."

Similar comments were made by the Manager of a local Nature Reserve who thought that one advisory group in particular was captured by a particular interest.

> "…. the North Norfolk one [AG] was dominated by those with the biggest axe to grind. There are a lot of user groups which were not represented so most of the time it was dominated by Common Rights Holders and wild fowlers."

Although the advisory group approach did not prevent accusations of special interest capture, it is important to realise that few participants felt they were unable to contribute during meetings. In fact when the representative from the local Wildlife Trust was asked if they thought the strong local voices within his advisory group might have limited the involvement of his and other interests he said:

> "It would have been their own fault if they could not get a word in because everybody was always given a chance, everybody could have their say."

This comment is all the more valid as it comes from an individual who found his concerns and interests often outside the remit of what was to be discussed, or as he said "shot down in flames". Despite this he did not feel the process denied him the opportunity to contribute.

It is clear that there is variation in the extent to which participants recognise the process as being dominated by any one subject or group. This is in part due to the different Chairmen and their ability to objectively manage their advisory group so everybody is allowed to contribute. The Chairperson is also a stakeholder and will want to ensure their concerns, and others with similar positions are heard. This is the inevitable trade

off with the content and contextual expertise they bring to the process. It is also true that the process of establishing the advisory groups may have allowed for the dominance of certain organisations from the beginning. There was no active attempt to recruit organisations with varied coastal interests. Instead the formation of the advisory groups was advertised and membership was determined by simply who turned up. In all three cases the first meeting was described as being the largest. It may be that individuals who were present at the first meeting felt either that the subject was not relevant to them or, alternatively, that they were unable to make themselves heard. Other than notifying them of future meetings little attempt was made to re-enlist these participants of the first meeting. In this way the advisory groups could be seen to be dominated by certain interests, while at the same time allowing those that do participate to contribute.

Chapter 9

Closing the Loop:

A description of empirical learning for stakeholder participatory decision-making

Introduction

Although The Environment Council's implementation of Stakeholder Dialogue varies from case to case, its application remains rooted in a set of principles that ensure certain features are always present. This chapter draws on the operational linkages identified in the previous case studies to explain how these principles combine, and interact with features of context, to determine the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. Reflecting on these explanations provides the thesis with the means to contribute to wider debates regarding the role of participation in environmental decision-making, and in particular, the critical discussions surrounding the notion of collaborative planning.

The aim of this chapter is to conclude the thesis by referring the empirical results to the discussions raised in Chapters 2 and 3. In order to achieve this Chapter 9 is organised around the first three research aims described in Chapter 1[57]. The first of these three sections concentrates on Stakeholder Dialogue and in particular the extent to which its principles combine to prescribe an effective process. The second section builds on this learning and reviews the influence of the three defining dimensions of participation as they were identified in Chapter 3. In this way the chapter seeks to make a contribution to the wider discussion regarding the effectiveness of participatory decision-making. Following on from this, the third section returns to the critical body of literature introduced in Chapter 2 and reviews the arguments in the light of the empirical work and the learning this offers. The fourth and final section of the chapter looks to the future and identifies those research questions to have emerged from this evaluation.

[57] The four research aims introduced in Chapter 1 are addressed throughout the thesis. For instance research aims A, B and C are also addressed by Chapers 3, 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 9 contributes to research aims A, B and C by identifying the learning available from relating the empirical results to Chapters 2 and 3.

9.1 A matter of principles

Stakeholder Dialogue describes a framework for a particular participatory decision-making technique. As a result, and like all deliberative and inclusionary processes, it shows significant variation in practice (see Acland 2001, O'Riordan *et al.* 1999). The form it takes depends on a combination of the topic, facilitator, socio-economic setting, cultural and historical background, and institutional and political environment. This ensures that the resulting individual applications of Stakeholder Dialogue are contextually embedded, making any general description of effectiveness potentially misleading. However, although practice is varied, each Stakeholder Dialogue process is built around a common set of principles. These principles define the participatory space in which each individual process is developed. They are born out of a combination of Stakeholder Dialogue's foundations in Alternative Dispute Resolution, the Strategic Choice literature and a normative basis that is common to the wider participatory turn in contemporary environmental decision-making. By exploring the relationships between each principle and its interface with features of context it is possible to identify a common explanation that describes what determines the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. The following discussion explores The Environment Council's rationale behind each principle and draws on the empirical learning in order to develop an explanation of effectiveness.

9.1.1 Stakeholder Dialogue is an inclusive process[58]

The process of Stakeholder Dialogue is guided by an understanding that "wherever there is doubt [regarding issues of inclusion] the default position is towards inclusivity" (Acland 2001: 25). The explanation for this principle can be traced back to the instrumental purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue and its focus on the delivery of sustainable change. This is clearly indicated by the organisation of stakeholders according to how they might impact on the production of a decision: *actors* (key decision-makers), *oilers* (those who make things easier if they are present) and *blockers* (people who can obstruct decisions if they are not invited) (Acland 2001). By encouraging the participation of a broad range of stakeholders the process is assured the

[58] Each of the following sub-headings (9.1.2 – 9.1.6) quotes a Stakeholder Dialogue principle as it is summarised by Acland (2001:24-26).

opportunity to hear all relevant knowledges, experiences and concerns, ensuring the resulting decision is comprehensive, accurate and implementable. Seen in this way the inclusionary principle is intended to create the basis for an effective and efficient process in line with a 'means-to-an-end' rationale rather than contributing to the transformative agenda that offers 'added value' to the decision-making process. In fact, the empirical results suggest the principle of inclusion challenges the production of such intangibles as ownership and trust.

By its very nature the principle of inclusion ensures the process engages with the broadest possible selection of interests and knowledges. The resulting diversity of expectations and motivations challenges the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue, in particular with regard to its ability to deliver an equality of benefits across the range of participants. This challenge is reinforced by a wider decision-making context that denies Stakeholder Dialogue the power to be 'organic' and instead imposes a particular focus that may not be shared equally by all participants. In addition to this contextual challenge the facilitation team is presented with the process challenge of identifying and understanding the different expectations stakeholders enter the process with. Current Stakeholder Dialogue practice cannot sufficiently address this diversity. Instead, it focuses on understanding the reasons why a 'problem owner' first contacted The Environment Council and although this effort will be extended to encompass a number of other immediate and influential stakeholder interests, the process remains focused on only a minority of participants. In the Thanet case this is seen from the large number of meetings The Environment Council had with two key stakeholders and, to a lesser extent, with the small number of organisations within the Management Group. There was little attempt to gain an equal understanding of why the majority of participants chose to attend the workshops. It would appear, therefore, that the emphasis on inclusion impinges on Stakeholder Dialogue's ability to fulfil its principle of equality, and in doing so it frustrates the delivery of transformative products.

The active recruitment of stakeholders in Thanet contrasts with the more passive approach adopted in Norfolk. In Thanet, this meant stakeholders were approached and invited to participate; a process that suggested to them that their interests were relevant to the purpose of the process. In Norfolk, although the opportunity to participate was widely advertised individuals were not directly approached. This is an important

difference between the processes and meant that Norfolk stakeholders chose to participate only after recognising their interests in the purpose of the advisory groups. As a result the participatory process had a much smaller 'range' of stakeholder interests and therefore the level of variation in experiences and benefits described by participants was less than seen in Thanet[59]. The learning from the Norfolk study reinforces the suggestion from the Thanet analysis that the effectiveness of the participatory process is influenced by the selection of participants.

The extent to which the principle of inclusion actually impacts on the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue is dependent on how bounded by a predetermined purpose the participatory exercise is. A participatory decision-making process is 'bounded' in the sense that it is initiated to address a particular topic or issue. Stakeholder Dialogue is applied as a reactive decision-making tool rather than a process of governance and as a result operates within a bounded space. The frustration and disappointment of some participants described in Chapter 7 highlight the contradiction between the bounded participatory process and the emphasis placed on inclusion. In order to offer a balanced distribution of process benefits the process must engage with stakeholders whose interests are closely aligned with the purpose of the dialogue; the risk associated with the inclusionary principle is that in attempting to ensure the decision-making process considers all possible knowledges and experiences it engages with participants for whom the purpose and intended products are of only marginal relevance. This poses the question as to why such stakeholders would choose to participate? Although participation is a response to a number of factors, the overarching reason behind stakeholder involvement is that participants *do* think the process is relevant, not least because they see themselves as invited in recognition of their interests. Perhaps most importantly however, the very same inclusionary principle that is behind their invitation also means that, given the resources available, only a minority of participants (a steering or management group) are offered the opportunity to have a real understanding of the purpose and thus are able to make an informed decision regarding their involvement.

The above discussion highlights how the application of Stakeholder Dialogue as a reactive decision-making tool conflicts with the priority Stakeholder Dialogue places on

[59] It is unclear whether this process of self-selection meant certain relevant interests did not participate, although the successful implementation of the management scheme suggests this was not the case.

inclusion. This tension is an example of the friction between formal processes of governance and new participatory approaches. Indeed O'Riordan suggests, "informal processes of governance can all too easily gibe against the formality of established decision-making procedures" (O'Riordan 1999:1). This analysis expands on this critique to suggest that the normative principle of inclusion, and the legitimacy it is intended to lend a participatory process, is contradicted by the power retained by elected representatives. As has been shown above this can be seen in the reactive use of Stakeholder Dialogue and the challenge the resulting 'bounded remit' poses for an inclusive process to deliver for all.

The evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue indicates that the boundary defined by the purpose of the Stakeholder Dialogue process is reinforced by the asymmetric relationship between power and rationality (Flyvbjerg 1998). The tendency for power to dominate rationality ensures that although a collective decision may be reached amongst stakeholders, the products that are acted upon are those that are sympathetic to the initiating purpose. This is seen in the Thanet case where action has focused on delivering the conservation designation and has largely ignored the production and implementation of the intended Coastal Action Plan. It is this asymmetric balance between the power of the rational communicative decision-making process and the power residing within the wider context that plays an important part in determining the sieve-like characteristics of the dialogue boundary. While the boundary is initially defined by the purpose of the dialogue, its 'permeability' is determined by the extent to which the power difference between the rational process and rationalising context is equalled. The commitment of key decision-making institutions to the notion of participatory decision-making is crucial to removing the gap between the two. This empirically based assertion supports the conclusion of an earlier literature review of participatory processes, that the value of a successful process "depends on a co-operative formal governance that is willing to incorporate and respond to such processes" (O'Riordan *et al.* 1999:1).

Although there is a real tension between the inclusive agenda and the dictation of purpose by elected decision-makers I do not believe it is such as to represent a fatal flaw in the participatory turn. Rather it emphasises the need for considered stakeholder

analysis that challenges the concept of 'blanket inclusion' rather than embracing it at face value.

In summary, Stakeholder Dialogue's principle of inclusion is a response to its focus on delivering instrumental gain. However, by embracing the principle of inclusion, Stakeholder Dialogue is significantly challenged in its aim of delivering a collective goal or a 'win/win' ending. Transformative benefits, such as ownership, trust and empowerment, are only experienced by a selection of stakeholders, typically those for whom the true purpose of the exercise closely matches their reason for participating. This inequality in benefits is reinforced by the failure of established 'hard' decision-making structures to successfully integrate with the 'soft' infrastructure of participatory decision-making.

9.1.2 Stakeholder Dialogue is a two-way process of communication

Stakeholder Dialogue's principle of interactive communication between all participants is an important factor in determining the effectiveness of the process. Seen alongside the principle of inclusion the emphasis given to dialogue offers an explanatory root for much that emerges from the process. The importance placed on two-way communication can be explained in terms of the normative arguments behind the use of Stakeholder Dialogue. The Environment Council makes a strong link between dialogue and the development of intangible benefits, saying: "real relationships, based on mutual understanding and leading to trust, evolve out of two-way communication" (Acland 2001:26). The empirical data from the Thanet study present a challenge to this developmental path by describing considerable variation in the relationships and trust found amongst the different stakeholders. Why should this variation result from a process intended to offer all participants an equal opportunity for two-way communication? The explanation for this inconsistency follows from the conclusions in 9.1.1 and is to be found in the emphasis placed on inclusion and its basis in an underlying instrumental purpose. Together, these features of Stakeholder Dialogue ensure the process provides an unequal opportunity for two-way communication. More significantly, for many participants the process is an exercise in one-way

communication that may allow expectations to be raised, only to then be frustrated by the 'boundary sieve' surrounding the dialogue.

In the Thanet case, real dialogue existed between only a minority of stakeholders, in particular between the representatives of English Nature and Thanet District Council. These stakeholders met on a number of occasions outside of the facilitated workshops and spoke regularly over the phone. It is telling that comments describing improved relationships and trust refer predominantly to both these organisations. Opportunities for real and developed dialogue between stakeholders diminish as the number of stakeholders increases. This is an important trade-off and is one way in which the instrumental argument behind the emphasis on inclusion can be seen to limit the opportunities for unconstrained dialogue.

At the same time, the instrumental purpose to the process ensures that it retains a predetermined focus. In order to maintain this focus the facilitation team select various different techniques that offer opportunities for stakeholders to present information, make suggestions and air concerns. However, these techniques represent a controlled environment for communication that offers only limited opportunity for open dialogue amongst stakeholders. What it does provide though is the opportunity many participants have been hoping for: the chance to air their individual concerns, many of which may fall outside the remit of the exercise. Effectively the process offers only limited opportunities for dialogue while at the same time providing stakeholders with the chance to voice their concerns in front of established decision-makers. This neatly captures the tension between the normative basis to the participatory process and its purpose as an instrumental decision-making method. The extent to which any Stakeholder Dialogue exercise can offer genuine opportunities for two-way communication depends on the strength of the boundary defining the process. As was shown above, this in turn depends on both the commitment to the notion of participatory decision-making on the part of established decision-makers and the extent to which the purpose is predetermined, for instance by statutory commitments.

The emphasis placed on inclusion ensures not only a large number of participants, with the obvious challenges this presents for face-to-face dialogue, but also considerable variation in the interests and perceptions of stakeholders. Such diversity in interests

means that many stakeholders do not share any common purpose and as a result have little incentive to develop a dialogue that might lead to improved relationships or greater levels of trust. Certainly, analysis of the Thanet data showed that stakeholders selectively engaged with the process, choosing to communicate and listen most actively when the focus addressed their interest.

9.1.3 Stakeholder Dialogue is designed and facilitated by independent professional facilitators

The central role of the facilitator in coordinating stakeholder participation is a defining feature of Stakeholder Dialogue. Their involvement is explained by reference to both the transformative and instrumental agendas behind the use of Stakeholder Dialogue. Their content independence is intended to ensure they do not take positions and as such "can ensure that meetings are balanced and even-handed as possible by, for example, preventing particular individuals or interest groups from dominating" (Acland 2001:225). In this way, and through the careful selection of appropriate participatory techniques, the facilitator intends to create a decision-making space in which participants can explain their needs and concerns, contribute to the process and, in doing so, build relations with other stakeholders and ownership over the products. However, the facilitator has an additional role that responds to the instrumental agenda; they are there "to ease the process of movement towards desired goals" (Acland 2000:6). Their very presence is a response to an inquiry from a 'problem owner' who employs them to remove the problem in such a way that the solution is owned by all those stakeholders on whom it may impact.

Although it is not recognised by The Environment Council, it is clear that the facilitator has two contrasting roles. They are 'decision guides' steering the process towards a desired goal, while at the same time fulfilling the role of 'quality control managers' ensuring the process meets criteria of equality and transparency. How they balance the tension between these two roles, the instrumental and the transformative, is influential in determining the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue.

An overview of the Thanet results gives some indication as to how effectively these hidden tensions are resolved. The four workshops successfully concluded with the

production of the management scheme. This was the instrumental purpose behind the use of Stakeholder Dialogue. However, the in-depth interviews with different stakeholders revealed the process was less successful in ensuring all stakeholders experienced the intangible and transformative benefits associated with Stakeholder Dialogue. On the surface, these results suggest that there is a contradiction in the two roles of the facilitator that challenges their ability to deliver equally the aims of each. By exploring the role of the facilitator further and reflecting on the Norfolk case, which did not employ a facilitator, it is possible to identify not only how the instrumental purpose emphasises the role of 'decision guide' over that of 'quality control manager', but also how it serves to undermine the facilitation techniques intended to deliver the transformative benefits to participants. As the previous discussion on communication showed, the aim of producing a conservation management scheme requires the facilitator to ensure the process maintains a relevant focus throughout the series of workshops. However, as a result some participants come to recognise the process as being dominated by a particular subject. In this way the instrumental argument behind the emphasis on inclusion also imposes a particular focus that does not register with the motivations or expectations of some stakeholders. By managing the process around a subject that is not the primary concern of all participants the independence of the facilitator is threatened and they can stand accused of controlling discussions to the point of manipulation. This is a perception that is reinforced by the often high-profile role adopted by facilitators that puts them at the front of the room and establishes them as the key controlling influence. In fact, in presenting themselves as the dialogue manager of a process dominated by a predetermined instrumental purpose, by directing people into groups, by explaining techniques such as the carousel, and by recording information, the actions of the facilitator threaten to undermine the very independence they are intended to establish.

The role of the facilitator in controlling opportunities for dialogue significantly impacts on the autonomy the process offers the stakeholders. Participants are limited in the extent to which they can govern the process, to accepting or amending the suggested agenda at the start of each workshop. This is in contrast to the autonomy offered to stakeholders in the Norfolk case by the use of self-governing advisory groups. The analysis of interviews with participants in the Norfolk case suggests that this autonomy gave the advisory groups a degree of control that not only offered them influence but

also ensured the process of hearing stakeholder voices was not undermined by accusations of manipulation. The instrumental purpose behind the Norfolk case was the same as for Thanet, to deliver an implementable management scheme. The fact that this did not appear to suffer in the absence of a facilitator may be a reflection of the greater degree of common purpose amongst the Norfolk participants than those in Thanet.

The emphasis the facilitators place on process design over contextual awareness amplifies the possible detrimental impacts their 'decision guide' role may have on the production of transformative benefits. By acquiring only a limited appreciation of the historical and social context of the case, facilitators are unlikely to be aware of how the focus and questions they pose to stakeholders might prevent them from raising issues that many had hoped to address by participating. It is interesting to note that in attempting to establish independence from issues of content, facilitators leave themselves open to accusations of being 'outsiders', unable to understand the peculiarities of a local issue. This challenge was offered by participants in the Thanet process and was given as an explanation for not using facilitators in the Norfolk case.

9.1.4 Responsibility for the agenda and the process is shared

The explanation for this principle is firmly rooted in the transformative purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue. In a review of principles, Acland says " the agenda must work for the stakeholders: people need to talk about the issues they want to talk about in a way that suits them" (Acland 2001:25). Although this comment suggests that Stakeholder Dialogue is built around an appreciation of the link between shared responsibility and intangible benefits, there is little to emerge from this empirical study to indicate that the link is made in practice. Shared responsibility for the agenda and process is prevented on two accounts, both of which are underpinned by an instrumental agenda. Firstly, Stakeholder Dialogue's embrace of the principle of inclusion ensures a broad range of interests are invited to participate. While the resulting diversity of stakeholders presents the process with a broad knowledge base, it also challenges the notion of a predetermined purpose. To promote a shared responsibility for the agenda amongst all participants would be to risk relegating the initial purpose in the face of competing stakeholder aims and expectations, or alternatively, focusing on the lowest

common denominator. As a result the agenda is developed in discussions between the problem owner, facilitation team and those individuals recognised as key stakeholders. This select group of stakeholders is identified by the facilitation team through a process of analysis that draws on the suggestions of the problem owner. Emphasis is given to those individuals who have responsibility for delivering possible products or the influence to prevent their implementation. The critical feature of this group is that it only represents a minority of the total number of participants. The majority of participants are offered the opportunity to accept or amend the agenda for each workshop as it is offered to them. However, the boundaries for the dialogue have been largely established and there is limited scope for substantial change. Along with a diversity of interests, the principle of inclusion can mean the process engages with a large number of individuals, immediately challenging the notion of shared responsibility for agenda and process. Indeed, it may be necessary to have a participatory process in order to establish a shared agenda in the first place.

The second feature of Stakeholder Dialogue to frustrate the development of a shared responsibility for agenda and process is the role of the facilitator. Facilitators develop what they think is an appropriate participatory process based on the information provided by the problem owner and a small number of stakeholders. Although stakeholders may challenge the suggested process, the presentation of the facilitator as a 'process expert' ensures responsibility rests with this one individual. Throughout the process itself the facilitator establishes a prominent role and dictates the various stages the participants work through during the workshop. The role of the facilitator, and their positioning of themselves as process experts, are contrary to a principle of shared responsibility for agenda and process. In preventing Stakeholder Dialogue from establishing a shared responsibility for process and agenda, the emphasis on inclusion and the control of the facilitator combine to provide an explanatory root for any resulting lack of ownership and accusations of strategic or manipulative decision-making. In fact, rather than being able to "talk about the issues they want to talk about in a way that suits them" (Acland 2001:25), many stakeholders may find themselves discussing issues of limited relevance to their interests in a way that does not suit them, and as instructed by the facilitator.

The limited opportunity for stakeholders in the Thanet case to set the agenda and develop the process is in contrast to the control and autonomy offered to each of the Wash & North Norfolk advisory groups. Although each advisory group had a chairman whose role to some extent mimicked that of the facilitator, the process was not susceptible to accusations of managed dialogue. Importantly, although they had some 'status', none of the chairmen presented themselves as 'process experts' and, as a result, they did not acquire the position of authority enjoyed by facilitators. From the outset this meant that if participants wanted to share responsibility for the agenda they were not required to challenge the suggestions of an unknown expert in order to do so. This is potentially a significant barrier to shared responsibility, especially if, as in Thanet, many of the participants had never been involved in anything similar before.

9.1.5 People attend as equals

Equality amongst participants describes a normative principle intended to provide the basis for a respectful and fair process. It is against this background that Stakeholder Dialogue must encourage deliberation, transparency and inclusion if it is deliver the intangible products linked with its use. Given its apparent importance as the foundation for successful transformative decision-making, it is perhaps surprising to see that The Environment Council explain it in language that focuses on its instrumental value, saying "....it is best if stakeholders can participate as equals. This means, in particular that ideas can be judged on their merits, not on their source" (Acland 2001:25). This is a limited interpretation of equality that emphasises the value to the instrumental goal of considering all information regardless of its source. If Stakeholder Dialogue is to deliver intangible benefits then equality must extend to more than simply considering all ideas. Indeed, there are important steps to be taken prior to any deliberation that are necessary to ensure participants are given equal opportunity to contribute their ideas. However, Stakeholder Dialogue is limited in its ability to fulfil these requirements by the emphasis it places on the principle of inclusion and its use as a reactive decision-making tool. In practice this means that those features of Stakeholder Dialogue intended to ensure participants are equal, the flat decision-making structure and the skills of the facilitator, are undermined.

The flat decision-making structure is intended to bring all stakeholders, regardless of their position and responsibilities, into the same decision-making space, and by doing so, offer all participants an equal opportunity to contribute and to be heard. However, this is a false equality, simply serving to capture considerable variety in stakeholders' understanding of aims, expectations, commitments and reasons for participation. The facilitation team is unable to understand equally the motivations and interests of each participant and as a result the process cannot be designed to offer all participants the same opportunity to make suggestions and have them heard. This imbalance in understanding is reinforced by the influence of the steering group made up of only a selection of stakeholders. Indeed, the instrumental requirement for an exclusive group of participants effectively removes the equality of opportunity Stakeholder Dialogue intends to offer through the 'flat decision-making structure'.

At the same time as denying participants an equal opportunity to participate, the often very varied understandings of process aims and stakeholder expectations create an inequality in the power participants have to influence the process. For instance, those participants with a true understanding of the aims of the process are able to make sure their contributions are relevant and therefore more likely to be considered by decision-makers than those of other, less well-informed stakeholders. Similarly, variation in the understanding of the background to the exercise, the statutory context, the role of national agencies and the use of expert language all mean that certain stakeholders have greater power to influence the process than others. A number of participants from local interest groups in the Thanet case commented that they often found the discussions confusing and they were unable to contribute. By keeping the presentation of information to a minimum, Stakeholder Dialogue does little to remove variation in knowledge and expertise.

The boundary between participatory decision-making and the 'hard' infrastructure of established forms of governance marks the limited meaningful delegation of power to Stakeholder Dialogue. Although the flat structure may place elected representatives, national agency staff and local residents at the same table during Stakeholder Dialogue, the extent to which power is actually shared is dependent on the level of commitment amongst established decision makers to the notion of participation and collective decision-making. The Stakeholder Dialogue process does not guarantee equality of

decision-making power amongst participants; established decision-makers retain the necessary power of delegation. The extent to which they seek to establish equality amongst participants is a reflection of their commitment to the participatory approach.

Gaining a true measure of this commitment can be very hard to gauge before the process has finished; this was seen in Thanet where the District Council indicated that they supported the participatory approach but then failed to put in place the Coastal Action Plan that was developed during the process. Establishing an accurate understanding of the commitment to the participatory process is further complicated by the distribution of power within established decision-making bodies. An example of this emerged during the Thanet process where it became apparent that the commitment the local English Nature Project Officer had to Stakeholder Dialogue was considerably greater than that of the National Office, but it was the latter that had the power to reject the management scheme the process had produced if they felt it fell short of their requirements. Similarly, there were differences of view within Thanet District Council regarding the role of the participatory approach, with the result that commitments made within the process, for example encouraging the installation of wildlife-based public art along the sea front, were not shared beyond the participating Authority officers and as a result were not acted upon by the relevant Council Officers.

The division of power amongst participants in the Norfolk case provides an interesting contrast with Thanet. Although the hierarchical management structure clearly separated representatives of local stakeholder groups from established decision-makers, the advisory groups enjoyed significant positive influence during the process. Indeed, rather than denying the advisory groups the power to influence the production of the management scheme, the gap between them and the Full Management Group lent them an autonomy and cohesion that allowed them to present a single and powerful voice to the decision-makers. In doing so, in this case, the gap could be seen to lend the process greater equality than the flat structure employed by Stakeholder Dialogue. While the facilitated flat structure limits the opportunity for an individual to dominate proceedings it also reduces the opportunity for stakeholders to present a collective voice to an audience of decision-makers. The process effectively denies stakeholders a decision-making audience by actually bringing them into the process. This may appear somewhat contradictory, but is actually a result of the limited one-way communication

within the process and the facilitator's attempt to establish equality amongst participants. Although the process is largely unsuccessful in establishing equality amongst stakeholders its limited success is sufficient to ensure key decision-makers are not separated out from the majority of participants in the process itself. This is born out in the comments of stakeholders from the Thanet workshops who said that they often tried to pin down a councillor or agency officer during the tea or lunch break, as they had not been given the opportunity to speak directly to them during the process.

By building on the empirical work, the above discussion has shown that not only is Stakeholder Dialogue significantly challenged in its aim of ensuring all 'people attend as equals', but also that the process itself can be seen to both maintain and reinforce inequalities amongst participants. The process aims to establish equality amongst participants through the skills of the facilitator. However, this reliance on the facilitator is misplaced. Their role in the process does not allow them to remove the variations in understanding, relevance and appropriate expertise through the selection of different participatory methods. In fact, their management of the dialogue can be seen to limit the opportunity for particular stakeholders to develop a power base from which they can challenge what is often the latent power of the established decision-makers.

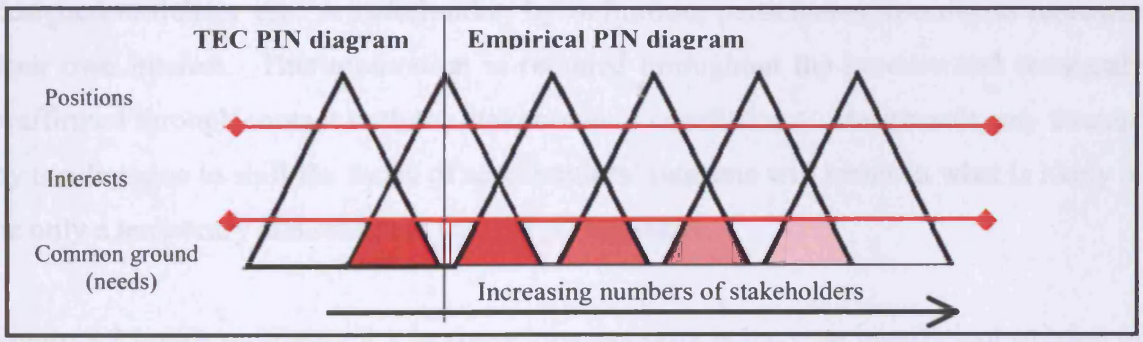
9.1.6 Positions, interests and needs: the PIN diagram

Rather than describing a principle, as The Environment Council suggest it does, the PIN diagram[60] outlines an important assumption that underpins the use of Stakeholder Dialogue. The premise is that all participants have shared needs and if these can be uncovered it becomes possible to build towards a collective goal, owned by all stakeholders. This evaluation has served as a test of this assumption and found it be challenged by a combination of a failure to fulfil certain principles and the instrumental emphasis behind the purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue. Together these factors meant the Thanet case concluded with considerable variety in the level of ownership different stakeholders attached to the management scheme.

[60] The diagram is set out in detail in Chapter 3

Fisher and Ury (1981) originally developed the PIN diagram as a schematic representation of Alternative Dispute Resolution between *two* parties. When developing Stakeholder Dialogue, The Environment Council drew on the Alternative Dispute Resolution literature and adopted the PIN diagram as the basis for how dialogue between *multiple* interests could conclude with a shared goal. In doing so The Environment Council made the assumption that the premise behind the diagram was transferable between these two different scales of participation. The results from this evaluation suggest this is not the case and that the inclusion of multiple interests means there is less likely to be any significant common ground across all participants. This can best be explained by re-drawing the PIN diagram so it more accurately represents the principle of inclusion behind Stakeholder Dialogue. The diagram below describes how the potential for stakeholders to share a common need decreases as their numbers increase. As a result the PIN diagram and the thinking behind it no longer offer an accurate representation of, nor a basis for, Stakeholder Dialogue.

Fig 9.1 The inclusive PIN diagram

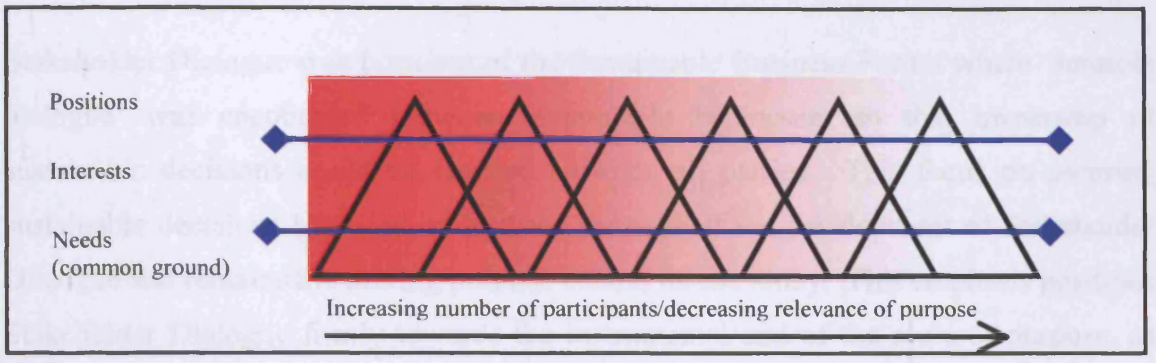


Even if one accepts that there may be fewer different positions represented in the process than there are participants, i.e. there are shared positions, there is still likely to be significantly more variation in the needs of different stakeholders than is represented in the PIN diagram adopted by The Environment Council. The Environment Council argue that all participants will share a common need for the basic human requirements of food, health, safety and space and that this is sufficient to build a common purpose. The results of this evaluation suggest any such common requirements are too far removed from the focus of the issue, indeed too general, to provide a relevant basis from which to build.

The PIN diagram is founded on an understanding that the defence of a selfish argument becomes unsustainable in a public and open deliberation and as a result a collective decision emerges from the dialogue. However, Stakeholder Dialogue's adoption of what is a predetermined and selfish purpose as the design stimulus for a workshop creates an environment that is unlikely to encourage all participants to put aside their own interests and commit to an imposed agenda. This is particularly the case with Stakeholder Dialogue. Unlike Citizens' Juries, which bring together a demographic sample of the public, Stakeholder Dialogue only engages participants with a relevant interest. The challenge for Stakeholder Dialogue is not just to establish a collective commitment to a certain topic but also to get participants to shift their focus from the very interest that motivated them to participate. The empirical data from the Thanet evaluation suggests that although stakeholders may leave the process accepting the management scheme, they judge its success in terms of how it addressed the substantive concerns relating to their interest. The results indicate that the transformative power of the Stakeholder Dialogue process is insufficient to ensure the necessary shift of interests that would mean all stakeholders were equally committed to the purpose the process is designed to deliver on. A stakeholder, by definition, participates in order to represent their own interest. This motivation is retained throughout the process and constantly reaffirmed through contact with the stakeholder's constituency. As a result, any attempt by the dialogue to shift the focus of stakeholders' interests will result in what is likely to be only a temporary and reluctant transfer of attention.

Figure 9.2 builds on Figure 9.1 to show how not only is there an insufficient overlap of needs amongst stakeholders but also how the instrumental purpose of Stakeholder Dialogue only coincides with the motivations of a proportion of the participants. The fading red band in the diagram describes how the strength of the 'match' between the purpose of the Stakeholder Dialogue process and the motivations of each participant weakens with each additional participant.

Fig. 9.2 Fixed purpose and multiple motivations



9.2 The dimensions of participation

The previous discussion identified how the tension between the twin rationales of participatory decision-making, the instrumental and the transformative, influences how Stakeholder Dialogue implements its principles. This understanding allows the thesis to return to the framework of participation developed in Chapter 3 and describe how the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue is shaped by its position on the three axes of participation. It then becomes possible to use the framework as an evaluation tool, allowing future evaluations to "answer questions about how successful different methods of enabling citizen participation might be" (Barnes 1999:62). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to apply the framework to the numerous different participatory processes that currently exist, especially as it does not remove the need to establish a sound understanding of the origins, purpose and practice of each method. However, by highlighting how Stakeholder Dialogue's position on the three axes determines its effectiveness, the thesis does add a point of comparison to the framework that can be used in evaluating contrasting processes and also as a means of gauging the likely effectiveness of similar processes.

In the following discussion I discuss the role each of these dimensions of participation has in determining the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue. This allows the thesis not only to develop a complete picture of the factors determining effectiveness, but also to offer a broad, generic description of Stakeholder Dialogue effectiveness prior to the influence of 'site specific' features of context.

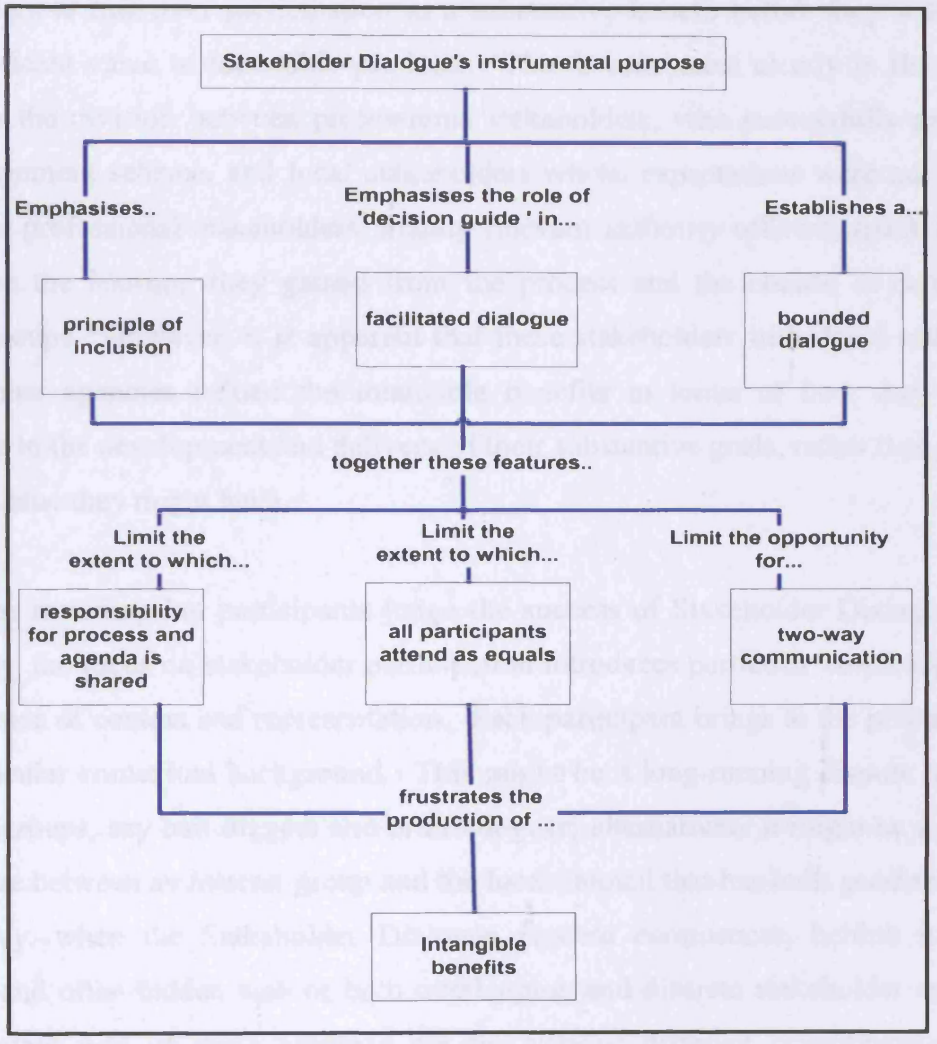
9.2.1 Purpose

Stakeholder Dialogue was born out of the Sustainable Business Forum where 'sensible dialogue' was encouraged between responsible businesses so that ownership of sustainable decisions could be reached between all parties. This focus on securing sustainable decisions has been maintained throughout the development of Stakeholder Dialogue and remains the driving purpose behind its use today. This emphasis positions Stakeholder Dialogue firmly towards the instrumental end of the scale of purpose, as opposed to the transformative where the emphasis is more firmly placed on enlargement of citizenship and generation of social capital. This is not to say that Stakeholder Dialogue is not intended to deliver these outputs. The language surrounding its use is rich with reference to enhanced communication, greater trust and improved understanding. However, by understanding its origins and tracing the development of products through the Thanet case it is apparent that the weight given to the instrumental goal can occur at the expense of the intended intangible benefits. Figure 9.3 provides a schematic representation of how the emphasis on an instrumental purpose influences the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue.

9.2.2 Participants

As its name indicates, Stakeholder Dialogue is a participatory process between stakeholders, defined by The Environment Council as "a person or institution having a stake in the outcome of a situation or decision" (Acland 2000:6). The term stakeholder captures considerable variety in participants. Clarke *et al.* (2001) describe a division that organises this variation into two groups, professional stakeholders and local stakeholders.

Figure 9.3 The influence of an instrumental emphasis



This dichotomy is based around the different contributions likely to be made by stakeholders from each of these two groups. However, this is a crude division that offers a poor indication of the possible variety in participants within a Stakeholder Dialogue process. Rather than organising stakeholders according to what they might contribute, this evaluation highlights the importance of organising them according to what they expect and want from the process. Adopting this approach ensures the process identifies considerably more variation than suggested by the professional/local division and most importantly describes the very different positions from which participants may judge success.

Stakeholder Dialogue's position on the participant axis challenges it to address the contrasting interests of the different stakeholders so that they each recognise the process

as addressing their concerns. It is evident from this evaluation that it is necessary for stakeholders to link their participation to a substantive benefit before they will attach any significant value to intangible products. This is seen most clearly in the Thanet case with the division between professional stakeholders, who successfully produced the management scheme, and local stakeholders whose expectations were not always met. The professional stakeholders, mainly relevant authority officers, speak of how they value the learning they gained from the process and the chance to meet local interest groups. However, it is apparent that these stakeholders from local authorities and national agencies valued the intangible benefits in terms of how they helped contribute to the development and delivery of their substantive goals, rather than for any intrinsic value they might have.

As well as meaning that participants judge the success of Stakeholder Dialogue quite differently, the focus on stakeholder participation introduces particular issues regarding the influence of context and representation. Each participant brings to the process their own particular contextual background. This might be a long-running dispute between two user groups, say bait diggers and ornithologists; alternatively it might be a history of dialogue between an interest group and the local council that has built good relations. Either way, when the Stakeholder Dialogue process commences, behind it lies a complex and often hidden web of both overlapping and discrete stakeholder contexts. An important part of these contexts are the various different constituencies each stakeholder represents through their participation. Unlike public participation processes where participants are selected as being representative of a particular demographic cohort, participants in Stakeholder Dialogue are assumed to act as representatives of their group or organisation. The extent to which this is the case is dependent on a number of factors, many of which the facilitator may be unaware of. For instance, it is not always clear what mandate participants have from their constituencies, and this can be the case for both large national agencies such as English Nature and small local interest groups, such as the water-ski club (see Munton 2003). If decisions cannot be made during the process, but instead have to be taken to the membership the participants represent, then the process must assume that this is done, and done in such a way as to offer all relevant individuals the chance to approve or disapprove suggestions that are brought to them. The structure of many small interest groups does not always allow this to happen and there is a risk that the implementation of decisions made within

the Stakeholder Dialogue process is frustrated by a lack of awareness and acceptance amongst loosely organised membership groups. This could be seen in the Thanet case during the Codes of Conduct meeting for shore anglers and bait diggers. Only one stakeholder had participated in the original workshops and the rest not only were unaware of the process but also did not accept all that had been agreed. It is clear that by focusing on the participation of representatives of groups and organisations with a stake in the outcome of a decision process, Stakeholder Dialogue risks separating itself from the majority of people on whom the decision might impact. This gap represents an important assumption, that either the process of Stakeholder Dialogue can effectively link the participants to their membership (however loose that may be), or that the gap has little impact on the effectiveness of the process. The Thanet results showed how the lack of wider awareness amongst participants in the Codes of Conduct workshops indicates that this assumption is misplaced.

At the same time as establishing a gap between participants and the individuals they represent, the process of Stakeholder Dialogue can reinforce this separation through the production of what might be referred to as an epistemic community. Those stakeholders that participated in the process share a common experience that offered them opportunities to learn about different issues and the positions of different stakeholders, an experience that was not available to their memberships. While some of this learning is transferable, the evidence from the Thanet case is that this rarely happens. It is unclear whether this is simply because of the challenge of communicating with what are often loosely organised groups or because of the intangible and experiential-based nature of the process. Either way it is possible for the participatory process to establish close ties between individual stakeholders that are not shared by the wider organisation they represent. This is an important consideration if Stakeholder Dialogue is to deliver implementable decisions and improved working relations between organisations rather than just individuals. This conclusion highlights the need for Stakeholder Dialogue to build greater outreach work into the process.

9.2.3 Power

Although The Environment Council describe Stakeholder Dialogue as occupying a position of partnership decision-making and shared power between participants there is much to suggest that this is an incomplete picture. In fact, the process captures a complex mix of power relations and contradictions that combine to challenge the description provided by The Environment Council. Principal amongst these is the apparent distance between the process and the wider decision-making context. The Stakeholder Dialogue process is designed to ensure all participants have an equal opportunity to influence the products and although this is challenged by the inclusionary principle, it remains at the heart of technique design and selection. Along with the suggested 'flat structure' that brings local interest groups into contact with established decision-makers, Stakeholder Dialogue techniques ensure the process at least has the potential to be *perceived* as offering an equal platform for all participants and removing power imbalances. However, if the perception of shared power amongst stakeholders is to be real, then Stakeholder Dialogue itself must have greater power within established decision-making structures.

As it currently operates this is not necessarily the case, and as a result Stakeholder Dialogue can occupy two positions on the scale of power described by Fig 3.1. The first reflects the internal mechanisms of the workshops, the various participatory techniques and the aim of the facilitator to judge ideas "on their merits, not on their source" (Acland 2001:25). This clearly locates Stakeholder Dialogue within the extended involvement and partnership positions on a scale of power. The second position reflects Stakeholder Dialogue's standing within the wider context of the surrounding decision-making structures. Seen on this contextual scale Stakeholder Dialogue's position on an axis of power may occur within a much wider range of power delegation, extending from partnership to consultation depending on the level of commitment amongst key participants to the notion of participatory decision-making. The extent to which these two positions of Stakeholder Dialogue on the axis power coincide is critical to determining the ability of Stakeholder Dialogue to deliver its claimed benefits to all participants. It is the scale of this disjunction that increases the opportunity for misplaced stakeholder expectations, which in turn form the basis on

which stakeholders judge success. In order to achieve the necessary 'match' between the power suggested by process and the power of process there needs to be improved integration between Stakeholder Dialogue and the surrounding decision-making context. This can be achieved either through changes in the relationship between representative decision-making institutions and participatory processes, or alternatively by ensuring that the position on the power scale suggested by Stakeholder Dialogue more accurately reflects the power it has within the wider context. If the latter is the case then it is important to appreciate that this can not be a static or fixed point, as Stakeholder Dialogue's power is neither constant in space nor over time. At both scales, temporal and spatial, the influence of the process is most apparent in the immediate.

9.3 A critical debate

In its review of the participation literature, Chapter 2 introduced an emergent critical debate that challenges the communicative turn within environmental decision-making. In doing so it highlighted the opportunity provided by this thesis to make an empirical contribution to this debate, and at the same time to reinvigorate the academic pursuit of an effective and yet egalitarian decision-making process. The following discussion responds to this opportunity and considers the critical arguments raised in Chapter 2 alongside the empirical findings of the evaluation. Although I focus on those arguments raised within the planning literature it is worth returning to the quote from the development text *'Participation: The New Tyranny?'* (Cooke & Kothari 2001:13, see page 43). Two of their conclusions in particular resonate with the findings of this evaluation. The first describes "the naivety of assumptions about the authenticity, motivations and behaviour in a participatory process". The emphasis Stakeholder Dialogue places on inclusion means it is forced to make assumptions about the authenticity, motivations and behaviour of participants; it is simply unable to establish a true understanding of each and every individual. As well as being challenged by the number and variety of stakeholders, the accuracy of these assumptions reflects a degree of naivety within Stakeholder Dialogue practice. Evidence of this can be found within the Thanet results. For instance, the results highlight the naivety of Stakeholder Dialogue's assumption that participants will judge the success of the process on the

basis of the imposed purpose and not from the position of their own motivations. The Thanet case also exposed the risk associated with an incorrect assumption of authenticity, especially when it concerns key decision-making institutions. The poor commitment, or lack of authentic participation, from Thanet District Council meant that many of the expectations of participants went unfulfilled. Thanet District Council's use of the process to promote their idea of a Marine Park offers an example of how the Stakeholder Dialogue process can remain ignorant of the strategic behaviour stakeholders might adopt.

Their second conclusion highlights how an "emphasis on the micro-level of intervention can obscure, and indeed sustain broader macro-level inequalities and injustice" (Cooke & Kothari 2001:13). Although this quote refers to participation within a development context, the results of this study suggest it is also relevant to Stakeholder Dialogue. It is certainly the case that The Environment Council stresses the importance of process design and focuses its energies on the selection and implementation of participatory tools rather than on issues of content or context. By having only an incomplete understanding of the subtleties of context, and failing to ensure there is sufficient commitment to Stakeholder Dialogue, the process may well present a false impression of opportunity and influence to participants. It is apparent from the Thanet case that the micro-level decisions of the facilitator can be redundant in establishing equality amongst participants if the process itself does not have sufficient power within the wider context. Instead of trying to establish the necessary recognition and acceptance, Stakeholder Dialogue continues to strive for a process-based equality; the more successful it is in doing so the greater the imbalance between process and context. The result can be that Stakeholder Dialogue risks reinforcing existing inequalities in decision-making and leaving participants frustrated and disillusioned rather than motivated and empowered.

This evaluation also offers a valuable comment on the relationship between participation in issues of environmental management and the notion of a collective action problem. Rather than meaning there are no significant individual incentives to participate, because of the indivisible nature of public goods, the results suggest that the public good focus means the process captures a broad range of personal motivations. Unless the objectives and remit of the process are clearly advertised and considered

throughout the stakeholder analysis stage, the non-excludable focus means that Stakeholder Dialogue offers a space for multiple different personal motivations. In doing so the risk attached to the participatory approach moves from issues of free riding and special interest capture to one of failing to address equally the different substantive agendas from which each stakeholder will judge effectiveness. Stakeholder Dialogue's emphasis on inclusion suggests that this is a potentially greater challenge than preventing special interest capture, especially as the prominent role of the facilitator is an effective tool for preventing domination by any one voice.

To conclude, I return to the critical analysis within the planning literature, and in particular that which describes weakness in practice. The emphasis on features of practice reflects the aim of this thesis to explain the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue through the identification of tensions in practice. When considering the various different practical concerns identified in the literature it is useful to bear in mind the different scales at which the process interacts with context. Chapter 6 provided a description of a 'gradient' of context, from the macro scale that captures those established features such as institutional structures and local social and economic history, to the micro level of process/context interactions. This division in context is reflected in the different practical challenges identified in the planning literature. In the discussion below I highlight the learning that this evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue offers for three critical themes that address the scale of context.

At the macro scale of context there is a recognition that if collaborative planning is to generate implementable planning solutions then there must be significant "institutional, legal and political restructuring" (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998:1983, see also Healey 1997). The results from this evaluation suggest that current participatory practice is one step ahead of any such restructuring. Although there was evidence that individual decision-makers had an understanding and appreciation of the notion of participation, the frustrations described by many participants are a response to an institutional failure to translate process-based agreements into actions. At the institutional level, both English Nature and Thanet District Council regarded the Stakeholder Dialogue process as a tool to assist their decision-making responsibilities. Adopting this perspective meant both organisations failed either to recognise the need or make the necessary institutional adjustments that would allow them to act on the

process-based, stakeholder-derived agreements for action. The current enthusiasm for participatory approaches to environmental planning presents a pressing need for this institutional context to be brought into line with practice. Although it is unclear how this institutional change would take shape, it is apparent that it would need to be built on a firmer appreciation of the risks associated with poorly supported participatory processes than currently appears to be the case. The common perception of participatory decision-making as a 'good thing' can hide the challenges it presents. Greater institutional understanding of the potential legacy of processes such as Stakeholder Dialogue may stimulate the necessary levels of commitment, ensure appropriate use of participatory methods and put in place mechanisms to facilitate communication between process and institution. If the institutional context continues to remain out of step with participatory practices there is a risk that stakeholders will be repeatedly frustrated. This may have a cumulative impact on individual incentives to participate, which in turn could undermine the inclusionary component and increase the opportunity for special interest capture.

A second critical theme can be seen to occur at a slightly smaller scale, one that links the participatory process to the results. Echoing the critiques found in the development literature, the debate within planning describes how the elevation of procedure over substance threatens to reduce the status of collaborative planning to little more than that of a talking shop (see Harris 2001, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). An environment in which deliberation and dialogue are actively encouraged is contradicted by the inadequate engagement with institutional context and the resulting uncertainty regarding outcomes. By focusing on the normative basis of *how* planning should be done, collaborative planning risks failing to deliver *what* should be done; as Fainstein says, "its vulnerability lies in a tendency to substitute moral exhortation for analysis" (Fainstein 2000:455). The findings of this evaluation provide a subtle yet important observation regarding this criticism. It is certainly true that Stakeholder Dialogue focuses on ensuring that the process achieves certain normative standards. But, despite the attention given to the process, the instrumental emphasis behind its application actually ensures it has a very real understanding of its intended substantive outputs and it remains focused on these throughout the process. This emphasis is in contrast to the attention given to the delivery of the transformative benefits. Rather than tracking the development of these intangibles as is done with the production of intended substantive

products there is an assumption that they will emerge from the 'correct' process. This study indicates that this assumption is misplaced and the development of transformative benefits must be monitored if the process is to be effective.

The priority Stakeholder Dialogue places on achieving its instrumental purpose serves to hide the fact that not all participants are equally motivated by the purpose of the process. The incentive for individual stakeholders to participate is an understanding that the process will produce outcomes that are relevant to their interest. This understanding is reinforced by the deliberative focus of the process, which offers an opportunity for stakeholders to engage on topics of concern to them. It is this apparent emphasis of process over products that resonates with the arguments within the planning literature. The priority given to inclusive deliberation must be balanced by a greater awareness of potential outcomes and an appreciation of the need for action if participants are not to leave frustrated.

While the two themes above have concentrated on the relationships between process, context and outcomes, the third focuses on the communicative process itself and, in particular, what Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger (1998:1982) refer to as 'the self question'. This describes what is seen as the optimistic expectation that all individuals will alter their behaviour upon entering a participatory process so it becomes grounded in "truth, openness, honesty, legitimacy and integrity" (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998:1981). Critics of collaborative planning suggest that this is a naïve assumption and that in fact participants may adopt various different forms of sociological action in order to achieve strategic aims. This empirical evaluation suggests that, although the participatory process may allow participants to employ strategic tactics, the opportunity for doing so is not equal amongst all stakeholders. The bounded and facilitated participatory process limits the opportunities for strategic behaviour amongst the majority of participants, while at the same time providing a space for participating decision-makers to employ other forms of social action that threaten to undermine the communicative act. From the outset the communicative act can be seen as embedded *within* a wider teleological action, that is, it is selected by certain decision-makers as the appropriate means to deliver an intended end result. By framing the communicative act in this way the behaviour of some decision-makers within the participatory process becomes one of dramaturgical action, the presentation of a particular behaviour for an

audience. The behaviour that is presented is one of communicative action. This analysis offers a subtle addition to the critique by Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) that challenges the implied independence of the communicative act and describes how other forms of social action are to be found *within* communicative action. While this position is supported, the results also suggest that the communicative action itself may be subsumed within a more dominant form of social action.

Evidence of strategic behaviour amongst participants who do not occupy positions of decision-making is less evident. I suggest that there are two reasons for this variation in behaviour. Firstly, the control and direction imposed by the facilitator limits opportunity for stakeholders to pick and choose their behaviour depending on what they hope to gain from participating. The Norfolk case reinforces this by identifying how in the absence of a facilitator, stakeholders were given the opportunity to form allegiances and work together to present one position. This is an example of normatively regulated action. The second reason is that the participatory process is presented to participants as an opportunity for them to introduce their ideas and concerns, in what they are told is an environment that hears and considers all contributions on their merits not on their source. Presented with this opportunity, one that may be new to many participants, there is limited incentive to adopt strategic behaviour. If the process tells participants to 'say what you think and it will be heard' then why should a participants do otherwise? Perhaps with time, stakeholders who have been frustrated by past experiences of participation may choose to employ forms of strategic behaviour in an attempt to ensure they benefit substantively from the process.

9.4 Future research

This thesis set out to explore the effectiveness of Stakeholder Dialogue and to test the assumptions behind the current participatory turn within environmental decision-making. The resulting picture to emerge from this retrospective evaluation poses a number of questions for the development of Stakeholder Dialogue and the application of other participatory processes. In the following discussion I describe possible future research questions suggested by the results of this evaluation. I have organised these

questions according to whether they address issues of practice, policy or academic research.

9.4.1 Stakeholder Dialogue practice

Stakeholder Dialogue emerges from this evaluation as an instrumental decision-making tool that currently has the potential to deliver significant transformative benefits to only a minority of participants. This immediately poses an overarching question that asks: how can Stakeholder Dialogue retain its effectiveness as an instrumental process while at the same time increasing its delivery of transformative benefits? Certain features of practice appear to frustrate the identification of intangible benefits by all participants. By addressing these features of process, Stakeholder Dialogue would be able to remove its self-imposed obstacles to equality in experiences. Firstly, Stakeholder Dialogue must address the notion of inclusion and the process of stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder Dialogue must identify a means of capturing all the relevant information and knowledge without engaging individuals who will not substantively benefit from their participation. In attempting to do this it will be challenged by the often hidden knowledge and relevance of some individuals and the risks associated with failing to engage them. Having secured relevant stakeholder participation the process must then seek to be truly self-functioning. However, this must be achieved without leaving it susceptible to special interest capture or weakening the standards of inclusive and transparent deliberation which the facilitator attempts to sustain. The question for Stakeholder Dialogue is: how can it reduce the control and influence of the facilitator without damaging the fairness of the participatory process? The third important area in which Stakeholder Dialogue must question its current practice relates to the level of contextual engagement. How can the process acquire the necessary contextual appreciation without becoming yet more resource demanding? Similarly, how can the process effectively bridge the gap between representatives and their constituencies so that they are sufficiently signed up not to undermine any products?

9.4.2 Policy

The overarching question for practice is equally relevant for the policy field. Policy and practice must develop together if Stakeholder Dialogue is in deliver its transformative potential alongside its instrumental benefits. Many of the questions for policy concern issues of scale and the gap that can appear between the local process and the wider institutional context. How to remove this gap and effectively engage with the participatory process remains a challenging question for policy processes. The scale of this challenge is perhaps most apparent when describing the gap between national policy development and local delivery. How can policy effectively engage the participation of local stakeholders in a participatory process without either limiting their opportunity for significant participation or raising expectations on local concerns that cannot be addressed? The evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue as a tool for securing the delivery of the Habitats Directive reinforces the challenge of addressing this question. How can the effectiveness of the participatory process be maximised in such a bounded policy space? How can the participatory process balance the notions of inclusion and dialogue while at the same time retaining the focus on a tightly bounded goal?

In the influence diagrams in Chapter 7 the gap between the process and the surrounding context was represented as a sieve and one of the key issues in determining its 'permeability' was the commitment of established policy makers. This poses the question: what level of commitment do policy makers have to show in order that the process delivers both instrumental and transformative products? This in turn leads to the challenge of identifying the obstacles that currently prevent them from contributing the appropriate level of commitment.

9.4.3 Academic research

The results of this evaluation of Stakeholder Dialogue highlight a number of themes for future academic research. In the discussion below I focus on three in particular, each of which has an existing academic literature. The first of these draws on the contrast between Norfolk and Thanet and the influence the Norfolk stakeholders enjoyed despite, or because of, their distance from the representatives of decision-making

organisations. This challenges the interpretation participation places on inclusion and has echoes of the 'insider-outsider' debates surrounding environmental pressure groups in the 1990s (Maloney and Jordan 1994). By establishing this 'outside' body of local stakeholders the key decision-makers were required to listen and respond to its contributions. The question this poses is how should local stakeholder interests be included for them to have most influence.

The second theme relates to the widely accepted understanding within the collaborative decision-making literature, that the defence of a selfish argument becomes impossible in a public debate. The evidence from the Thanet evaluation is that stakeholders retain their personal motivations and judge the success of the process by how well these are addressed. This challenges the participatory process to deliver a collectively owned conclusion and poses the question of how to engage stakeholders and the knowledges they bring without triggering their individual perceptions of success.

The final research theme relates to the 'baggage' that participants bring with them into the participatory process (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998, Owens 2000). The results of this evaluation suggest that this often hidden element has an influential role in determining the effectiveness of the participatory process. It is apparent from this study that the capacity of the participatory process to deliver for all participants is dependent to a large extent on its ability to understand the individual motivations, expectations, histories and perceptions of each stakeholder. This is a challenging demand and one that is not sufficiently addressed in the literature on participatory planning.

9.5 Final thought

If processes such as Stakeholder Dialogue are to deliver on their claim of transformative instrumental decision-making, they must acknowledge the tensions and contradictions identified in this thesis and seek to implement a process that offers a realistic and comparable return for all participants. The current 'participatory turn' in environmental policy can only be sustained if it is built on an empirical appreciation of what it can deliver to all those it engages with. If *future* participatory decision-making processes are to have participants, current processes must satisfy *today's* participants.

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Appendix A

Additional principles of Stakeholder Dialogue that appear in The Environment Council literature.

Principle	Comment	Reference
Openness, honesty, trust	Achieving commitment requires good faith on all sides.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Stakeholders take responsibility	Responsibility for the outcome rests with those involved – facilitators are merely catalysts.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Common information base	Stakeholder Dialogue rests on a sharing of information and establishing where necessary a common source for it.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Mutual Learning	Stakeholder Dialogue depends on the willingness of people to learn from and be influenced by others.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Creative options	Bringing together diverse people means potentially more options and more creativity.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Consensus decisions	Building ownership of decision making through consensus increases the chances of a decision being properly implemented.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Informed consent	Those who agree to something must understand its implication and consequences.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Shared responsibility for implementation	Once a decision has been reached, those involved must ensure it is implemented and get their constituencies' support.	*Working with your Stakeholders* (Acland 2000)
Resolve internal organisations first	Neither people nor organisations are monolithic , sometimes you have to deal with internal problems before you can tackle the external ones.	*Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999
Acknowledge past mistakes	It is necessary to accept responsibility where appropriate	*Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999
Conventional working and Stakeholder Dialogue	Conventional style is effective when there is little or no conflict. Stakeholder Dialogue is designed for the opposite circumstance.	*Enabling environmental Stakeholder Dialogue. (undated)*
Identify and reduce uncertainty as soon as possible	Uncertainty breeds fear, fear breeds hostility and hostility generates conflict.	*Guidelines for Stakeholder Dialogue* 1999

Appendix B

Case studies of Stakeholder Dialogue

The Environment Council has practised Stakeholder Dialogue since the early 1990s; during that time, the process has been applied to a wide range of issues and contexts. The charitable aims of The Environment Council ensure that there is limited repetition between the various cases while at the same time retaining a focus on environmental decision-making. Below I describe three short case studies that offer some indication of the variation in the use of Stakeholder Dialogue.

I. Remediation of contaminated land on nuclear-licensed sites

The purpose of this case was to provide future guidance regarding the remediation of contaminated land on nuclear-licensed sites, with the necessary grounding in the various issues that needed to be addressed. The process engaged at a national level with a range of stakeholders: owners of nuclear-licensed sites, regulators, contractors working for the nuclear industry, and national and local government. The Stakeholder Dialogue process ran over a four-month period with one participatory workshop. Most of this time was taken up with stakeholder analysis and process design. The Environment Council describes the process as producing a "wealth of ideas and suggestions" (Stakeholder Dialogue Case Study undated:2), and in subsequent promotional material refers to the benefits resulting from this use of Stakeholder Dialogue as being the knowledge that:

- a large cross section of interested parties had been consulted and given the opportunity to listen to each other's concerns;
- a large group of organisations were able to hear about the proposed project, 'fed into it and became supportive of it';
- the funders were seen by the wider community to be operating an independent and transparent process.

II. Hampshire waste management strategy

In the early 1990s, the proposal by Hampshire County Council to build a large waste incinerator near Portsmouth was met with fierce local opposition that quickly established itself as a dedicated campaign group. After fighting the campaign for two years the Council abandoned the plan and engaged in a process of Stakeholder Dialogue in order to develop a new waste strategy. Participants included the Council, waste management companies, and community interest groups from Hampshire, such as church groups, Rotary Clubs and local environmental groups. The process ran on the basis of three regional working groups made up of community interests including the campaign group. The process resulted in a new waste strategy for the county which The Environment Council claimed had the ownership and support of the various participants.

III. Good practice guidelines for wind energy

Despite being a 'green' energy source the establishment of many early wind farm developments was often characterised by heated debate regarding the impact of these large-scale structures on rural landscapes. In response to this, the British Wind Energy and the DTI funded a Stakeholder Dialogue process to develop a set of good practice guidelines. The process was run at a national level with approximately forty stakeholders representing developers, environmentalist and planners. The original workshop led to drafting groups working alongside the facilitator and the guidelines' editor to develop sections of the document. A second workshop was used to finalise the text and to resolve any outstanding contentious issues. The guidelines were published by the Department of Trade and Industry but remained 'owned by all those that contributed' (Acland *et al.* 1999:30).

Appendix C

Initial criteria suggested to facilitators as offering a potential template for guiding the selection of an appropriate Stakeholder Dialogue case study. This table includes the comments received from a facilitator.

1	*No of stakeholders*: **Can the process be equally strong with any number of participants?**	**Weighting**
Comments: In my view, yes due to one of its main strengths – that the process is designed and run according to the number of participants rather than the all-too-common alternative of the meeting/event being run to a format determined by the size of pre-booked venue. Design according to numbers reduces the chances of problems arising because people who believed they should be these getting upset because they were excluded "because we're full up".		Medium

2	*Power relationships inside and outside the process:* **Can the process manage power imbalances effectively?**	**Weighting**
Comments: A good process has to – if power imbalances are not being managed by the process it probably isn't a genuine stakeholder dialogue.		High

3	*Accountability of the decision making body*: **In particular the relative influence of private or public bodies.**	**Weighting**
Comments: Is this a continuation of 3? In which case the same applies – though with both, and especially the public bodies, participants and representatives of the bodies themselves have to be explicit about their status and role in the process. For instance, civil servants advise and ministers decide – so any process which includes them must acknowledge this. They can advice members of the process and the result of collective deliberations might influence the advice that is subsequently given to ministers.		High

4	*Timing*: **How is the success of the project influenced by the timing of its initiation?**	**Weighting**
Comments: I think it was Eric Morecombe who said In life, timing is everything... If the timing is wrong the project won't work. Timing can be too soon – and people aren't ready.		Very High

8	*Geographical scale*: **Can stakeholder dialogue be equally effective when dealing with local and national issues?**	**Weighting**
Comments: Yes – though effectiveness on local issues depends on whether there is a national/strategic dimension which also needs dialogue – road building schemes (local issues) fall into this grouping		Low

9	*Agenda and rule setting*: **How does different levels of involvement in setting the agenda influence the success of the decision making?**	**Weighting**
Comments: A genuine stakeholder dialogue gives all the participants the opportunity to set and review the agenda. If this isn't done it has a direct bearing on the quality of the discussion and buy-in to the results.		Very high for joint agenda & rule setting

10	*Scope*: **does a tightly bounded dialogue limit the objectives? How important is the openness of the dialogue in ensure (ING) a successful process?**	**Weighting**
Comments: These are two separate questions for me. I'll answer openness next. How the dialogue is bounded is up to the participants, though to get started the convenor needs to develop a viable opening premise. How tightly the dialogue is bounded may depend on circumstances - it can be bounded by issue or, in some circumstances, numbers if it is about resolving a 1:1 disagreement. How tightly it is bounded is not a limitation on the overall objective – finding a resolution/way forward		Not sure this is applicable

11	**How important is the openness of the dialogue in ensure (ING) a successful process?**	**Weighting**
Comments: The short answer is *very* though the timing of opening up a discussion is critical. Sometimes the level of conflict and degree of senisitivity in a situation mean that confidential approaches and discussions may form an essential pre-requisite to creating a more open dialogue.		ditto

12		

Appendix D

Correspondence with facilitators arising from initial attempts to define critical criteria in the selection of Stakeholder Dialogue examples.

[redacted], 19:14 18/03/01 +0, Re: PhD Survey

Date: Sun, 18 Mar 2001 19:14:52 +0000
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
From: [redacted]
Subject: Re: PhD Survey
X-Mailer: Turnpike Integrated Version 5.01 U <FnP3IalMqf0HJX567rzXntO7xR>

Sam

I am sorry about this. I received your letter with all this stuff really cannot get my head around, what your are doing, why and how in any way it will be useful and to whom.

Do you propose to turn the questions into numbers, plot them on a graph and give show to show some kind of numerically way of evaluating stakeholder dialogue? If you are total and pointless waste of time.

<- Not what I was suggesting.

Stakeholder dialogue is NOT at tool or a technique, it is NOT a way of doing things. It is an approach, it follows a number of principles and a philosophy for dealing with communication, engagement, participation, conflict, prevention and resolution and decision making. (It was in fact a term that was invented for one particular process to help give comfort to the client and a number of stakeholders.)

I know there is pressure from certain quarters to evaluate evaluate evaluate, but this is mainly coming from people who are not practitioners, and who are on the look out for a bit more research funding and want for some reason to pigeon hole everything into a particular way of doing things.

I know this is probably not much use to you and your research

I have to say I think your criteria and 'weighting' is pretty meaningless. I know you said our comments would be anonymous but frankly I think this kind of work is a bit like the emperors new clothes... maybe I'm the only one who thinks this in which case I will stick my head back down and stay quiet.

[redacted]

In message <3.0.6.32.20010316135342.00873100@pop-server.ucl.ac.uk>, [redacted] writes
>Hi
>As you might be aware I am carrying out a survey amongst facilitators and
>staff at TEC regarding my selection of case studies for retrospective
>evaluation. I have attached two documents, the first outlines the purpose
>of the survey and how I would like you to complete it and the second is the
>survey itself. Yow will receive the same information in the post in the
>next few days, feel free to respond that way if you would rather.
>
>I plan to present a summary of the findings back to the facilitators at a
>future meeting at TEC.
>
>Thank you very much for your time in completing this and I look forward to
>meeting you in the future.
>
>Cheers
>Sam Gardner
>
>[A MIME application / msword part was included here.]
>
>

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: PhD Survey
Date: Mon, 19 Mar 2001 10:33:52 -0000
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 5.00.2014.211
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V5.00.2014.211

I'm glad I'm not the only one who can't get her head around what this is all about. I just keep thinking that I'll have to think about it later and feeling rather irritated about having such a task in my 'in-tray'. I'm sure I would feel a lot better about the whole thing if approached in person - also if the discussion and weighting of criteria was a facilitated group session it would be a very interesting meeting - but the idea of deciding on my own how to weight criteria (which I 'think' I understand - but may not have a shared understanding) with my individual perception of 'high, medium and low' - nightmare! The end product cannot be of much value.

I wait to read other e-mail thoughts with interest
Rowena
----- Original Message -----
From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, March 18, 2001 7:14 PM
Subject: Re: PhD Survey

> Sam
>
> I am sorry about this. I received your letter with all this stuff
> really cannot get my head around, what your are doing, why and how in
> any way it will be useful and to whom.
>
> Do you propose to turn the questions into numbers, plot them on a graph
> and give show to show some kind of numerically way of evaluating
> stakeholder dialogue? if you are total and pointless waste of time.
>
> Stakeholder dialogue is NOT at tool or a technique, it is NOT a way of
> doing things. It is an approach, it follows a number of principles and
> a philosophy for dealing with communication, engagement, participation,
> conflict, prevention and resolution and decision making. (It was in
> fact a term that was invented for one particular process to help give
> comfort to the client and a number of stakeholders.)
>
> I know there is pressure from certain quarters to evaluate evaluate
> evaluate, but this is mainly coming from people who are not
> practitioners, and who are on the look out for a bit more research
> funding and want for some reason to pigeon hole everything into a
> particular way of doing things.
>
> I know this is probably not much use to you and your research
>
> I have to say I think your criteria and 'weighting' is pretty
> meaningless. I know you said our comments would be anonymous but
> frankly I think this kind of work is a bit like the emperors new
> clothes... maybe I'm the only one who thinks this in which case I will
> stick my head back down and stay quiet.
>

Reply-To: [redacted]
From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: PhD Survey
Date: Mon, 19 Mar 2001 13:47:38 -0000
Organization:
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 5.00.2314.1300
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V5.00.2314.1300

Dear Sam

We have not met but I have been aware of the work you are proposing to do from a distance via e-mails which have been circulated around the net-work

I would like to follow-on from [redacted]'s e-mail or should I say rocket. It looks to me Sam [redacted] please forgive me for being presumptuous) as though you've got a pissed-off stakeholder on your hands.

I completely agree with [redacted] when she says,

> Stakeholder dialogue is NOT at tool or a technique, it is NOT a way of
> doing things. It is an approach, it follows a number of principles and
> a philosophy for dealing with communication, engagement, participation,
> conflict, prevention and resolution and decision making.

and I would like to add that it is an approach and set of principles which could be well applied to the way an evaluation is carried out. So what to do when you have upset stakeholders? You have to ask the question Why? I will not try and answer this question on behalf of [redacted] or I may well get a
rocket coming my way (that is if there isn't one already launched) but if there's one thing I do know about facilitators it is that they do not like poor process (as they see it) and they get stroppy when one is put upon them.

I also share [redacted]'s general confusion and lack of understanding about where this is all going and how to respond in the way that you have asked and if I am honest I would also say that I am feeling a bit defensive. I think this is
because from my perspective you are approaching this evaluation in what we facilitators call the 'Decide-Announce-Defend' mode of working, which is to say, you have decided that you will do this evaluation and how you are going to do it, you have announced this to us, and that leaves us with little else to do but to react, there's no meaningful participation.

By chance I have spent much of the last couple of months exploring how the principles which underlay stakeholder dialogue can be applied to the world and industry
of evaluations, I do not have any quick fix answers but if you would like to get together to talk it through please give me a call.

Kindest regards, [redacted]

[redacted]
Tel: +44 (0)1926 33 66 59
Fax: +44 (0)1926 77 11 55
----- Original Message -----
From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]

Subject: SAM GARDNER re: PhD Survey
Date: Mon, 19 Mar 2001 17:40:17 -0000
X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
X-Mailer: Microsoft Outlook Express 4.72.3155.0
X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V4.72.3155.0

Sam.....Hi!

Occasionally we facilitators latch onto a subject into which we all want to get our teeth. This may be one of them - it certainly seems like one which will just run and run. I hope you are resilient!

Did anyone tell you why I walked out of your project before it really got started? Maybe they should have done. If you would like to talk about it let me know.

Keep smiling.....[redacted]

Date: Mon, 19 Mar 2001 19:28:21 +0000
From: [redacted]
Organization: zoo
X-Mailer: Mozilla 4.6 [en-gb]C-CCK-MCD NetscapeOnline.co.uk (Win98; I)
X-Accept-Language: en-GB,en
To: [redacted]
CC: [redacted]
Subject: Re: SAM GARDNER re: PhD Survey

Oh. Such wrath and wailing and knashing of teeth. To quote Sam, "I am presently in the process of developing selection criteria...". "I have constructed an initial rationale...". "It would be very useful for me to gain some...agreement or simply information, regarding the different criteria..." And so on.

Strikes me Sam needs some constructive feedback. How do we evaluate the process that we design and run? We don't engage all the stakeholders do we? And we don't get our criteria using solely elicitative methods either. So why so high and mighty about SD - which is after all a methodology that we all practice differently.

Clearly a methodology for research influences outcomes and the researcher will not be able to discern all their unconscious influence over the outputs of their research , but nevertheless it strikes me that Sam's trying to scope out some research. And he's asked us to comment. Why berate him? Is this the sort of feedback we would want?

It seems we have at least three choices. If we don't like it fine, we can leave it be (coz if it ain't Sam it'll be someone else). If we have doubts, we can make them focussed and constructive. And if we think it's a good idea we'll fill in the forms, give Sam feedback and participate in the construction of his research.

Previous experience of e-mail 'dialogues' leads me to this conclusion - one of you will read all of these e-mails and then come up with some sagacious synthesis. In the meantime, I think I'll stop reading this thread.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Sam Gardner <[redacted]>
To: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Sam's survey
Date: Tue, 20 Mar 2001 15:27:06 -0000
X-Mailer: Internet Mail Service (5.5.2448.0)

> ----------
> From: [redacted]
> Sent: Tuesday, March 20, 2001 3:27:06 PM
> To: Sam Gardner
> Subject: FW: Sam's survey
> Auto forwarded by a Rule
>
>
>
-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] [mailto:[redacted]]
Sent: 20 March 2001 15:14
To: [redacted]
Subject: Sam's survey

[redacted],

I have no longer got Sam's email address - could you forward this to him please.

Sam,

I hate to join in the rising chorus of bleating and braying about your survey - but I think I have to say something.

First, a query: - are you asking us to fill it in with regard to one particular dialogue we each choose, or is it intended to reflect the sum of our individual dialogue expereince?

If it is the former, I could imagine putting some useful comments in the text boxes. But I am afraid that I entirely agree with [redacted] about the weighting - it's meaningless. (And the problem is that, despite that, as soon as you start putting numbers in there, people will think it does mean something.)

If it is the latter, then I am afraid I think the whole thing is very shaky indeed. It's a bit like trying to set out general criteria for consrtucting a good building. It depends.....what's it for, where do you want it, how many people have to fit in it, what are the surroundings like, how big is your budget, when do you need it by.....etc etc. Every dialogue is different - and if not, someone is doing something wrong. So trying to generalise about the importance of criteria is not worthwhile. What you could do instead, I guess, is ask a slightly different question about the ways in which the factors you have listed can influence the chances of success. (If you know what you mean by success..... Degree of consensus achieved? Degree to which the results get implemented on the ground? Durablility of the outcome?)

Sorry - that probably causes more confusion than it resolves. HOpe you can make something of it.

[redacted]

Original-Received: (ElectricMail dialsmtp gateway 1.10)
PP-warning: Illegal Received field on preceding line
From: [redacted]
Date: Tue, 20 Mar 2001 10:49:30 EST
Subject: PhD survey
To: SAMG@envcouncil.org.uk
X-Mailer: AOL 5.0 for Windows sub 106

> ----------
> From: [redacted]
> Sent: Tuesday, March 20, 2001 3:49:30 PM
> To: [redacted]
> Subject: PhD survey
> Auto forwarded by a Rule
>
Dear Sam,

I am sorry my colleagues have been so beastly to you: they're a rough lot.

I think I understand what you are trying to do and I would be very happy to help.
Having tried to do the exercise myself, however, I am rather inclined to agree with my colleagues, and I understand better why [redacted], a heavyweight authority in the field, has always refused this kind of thing.

I have answered your survey questions as best I can, but I am afraid you will find a lot of 'it depends' - because it does. The core of the problem - which I'm not sure TEC always really grasps - is that there is no one single process called 'stakeholder dialogue'. There is a philosophy and a bundle of tools, and then the creativity, the craft - and the human cunning (in the old, real sense) - that turns these into a conversation that works for that group of people on that day. And that's it.

The weighting is a non-starter. Sorry: even if I could do it - which I can't - it would be meaningless.

I have a suggestion. Get TEC to book you onto the next six-day course and/or attend some projects. I think you will begin to see what I'm getting at.

Do give me a ring sometime if you want to talk.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

Attachment Converted: "r:\dos\eudora\attach\Survey2.doc"

Appendix E

Facilitators meeting photo report – 16th May 2001

The Environment Council

The Environment Council

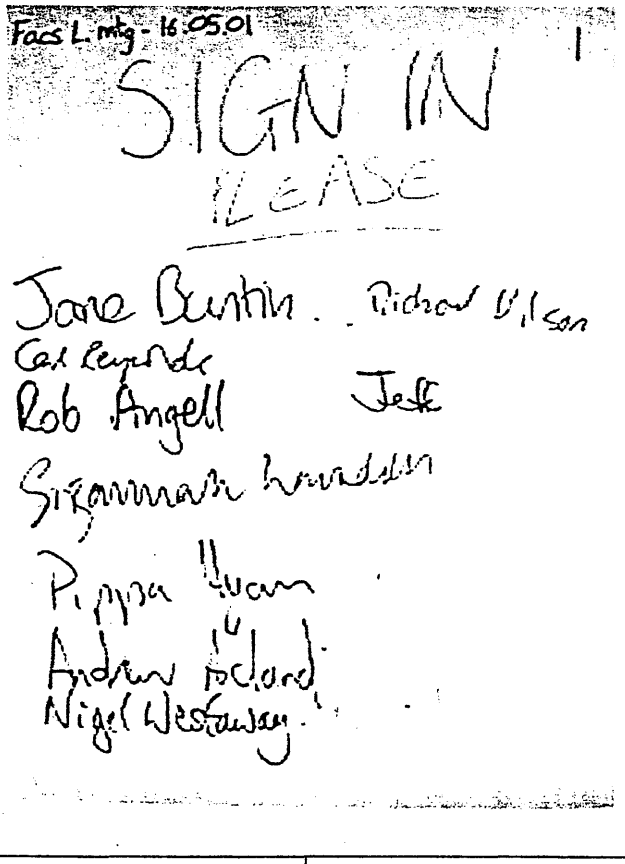
Facilitators' Learning Meeting
16th May 2001

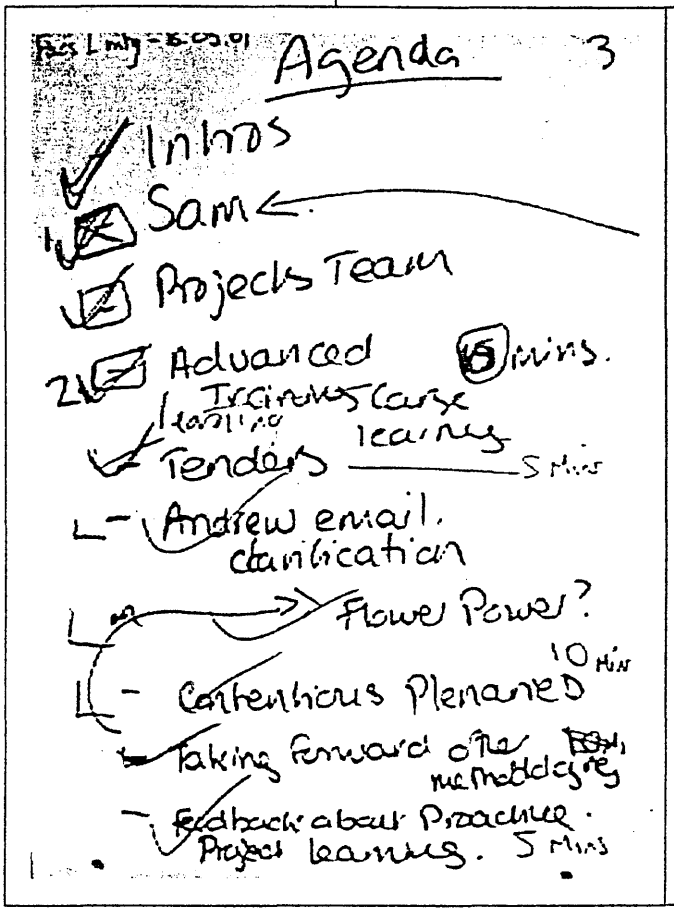
Photo-Report

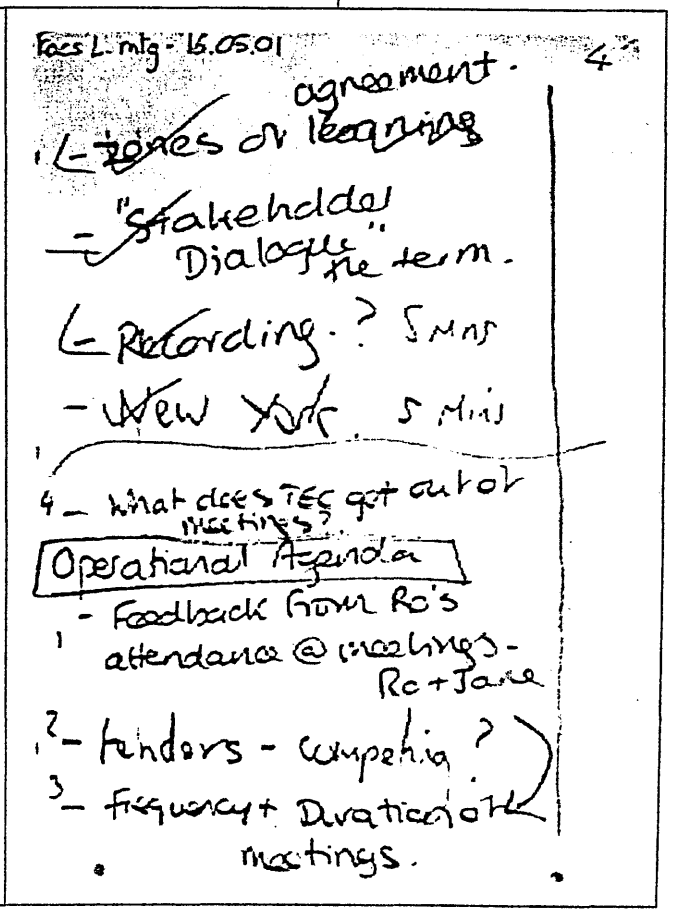
30th May 2001

212 High Holborn
London WC1V 7VW
tel 020 7836 2626
fax 020 7242 1180
email info@envcouncil.org.uk
www.the-environment-council.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 294075 Certificate of Incorporation Number 2004003 VAT Number 577 8121 11







Date	16th May 2001	**Project**	Facilitators' Learning Meeting
Group	TEC project related staff and facilitators	**Subject**	Sign in & Agenda

Ideas

1 Where SD differs from other processes/methodologies

2 Principles + Practice definition/how they interlink

3 Case studies for Sam to study - retrospective.

- SD [illegible] from Brain Storm process.
- The fact that it has become associated with us is causing us problems. - Expectations us.
- But SD is not all we do!

Principles of S Dialogue 2

- Consensus is compromise
- Invisible products
- Deals with D - I - N
- Process dealt with separate from content
- Extends the paradigm beyond conventional consultn.
- Styles of conflic management
- Uncertainty, fear + Hostility
- Incremental Progress/Iteration?

Date	16th May 2001	**Project**	Facilitators' Learning Meeting
Group	TEC project related staff and facilitators	**Subject**	Ideas and Principles of stakeholder dialogue

Facs L. mtg - 16.05.01 1

What is different about SH/D.? What are constants?

* Begin/re process
* Designing a process that meets the needs of Participants
* Has to be? could be collective a group of people
Problem ~~owner~~ holder person
Who can effect change? expectations.

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 2

What defines how you design a process?

1. Needs of client Primary problem holder
2. Sensitivity of ~~project~~ situation

Are we creating religion that is "ours"?

When do you say process is over?

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 3

{Conflict +
{Conflict prevention

{Overall process +
{One off meeting

Definition of SH/D
- Consensus building
- inclusivity
- managed process
- access to process

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 4

Decision making.
Dialogue,
or, contribution to decision making dialogue

Inform decision

What makes us approach problems in these way?
- We may push some terms harder than others.

Date	16th May 2001	**Project**	Facilitators' Learning Meeting
Group	TEC project related staff and facilitators	**Subject**	Discussion about what defines stakeholder dialogue

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 5

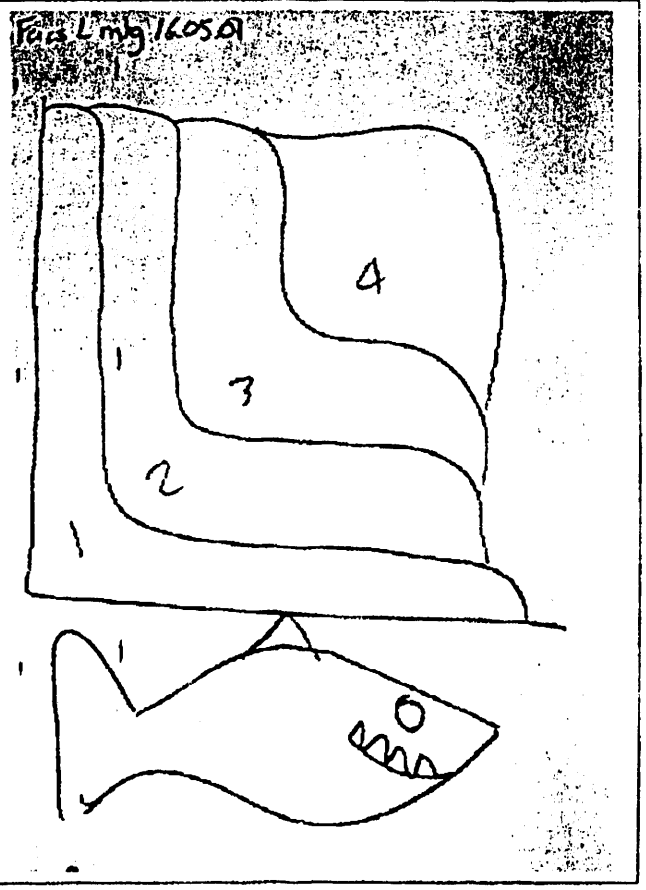
- We are pragmatic for time, necessity, client etc based facts
- Tricks + techniques are not constantly same as our principals + process ideas
- Operationalisation of things
- weighting
- balance

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 6

- Push different things at diff times + in diff ways
- How to measure invisible benefits?
- How will evaluation be done
  - 1) Past cases — difference between process + results
    - time — interviews
    - dialogue — surveys
    - with VETs. — follow up on what happened
      - ↳ how far did it go on.

Facs L. mtg - 16.05.01 7

2) Contempory cases matching criteria follow it start to end.



Date	16th May 2001	**Project**	Facilitators' Learning Meeting
Group	TEC project related staff and facilitators	**Subject**	Discussion about what defines stakeholder dialogue

Facs L mtg - 16.05.01 — 5

Action

New phone list → facs	JB
list of advanced learning. Circulate + add'l.	Lara
other methodology req'l learning meeting → ask SAM	Rob talk to Becca
Sum → Next learning meeting	J.B
IF ref books + authors give → SAM	All
Ask GM co. what it could have done 4 years ago that might have got them involved.	

Facs L mtg 16.05.01

Actions (2)

Send TEC training ~~brochure~~ to New York contacts	Phi

Date	16th May 2001	**Project**	Facilitators' Learning Meeting
Group	TEC project related staff and facilitators	**Subject**	Action list

Appendix F

Thanet case study statement by The Environment Council

stakeholder dialogue in action

case study

Development of a Management Scheme for the Thanet Coast

Group of Stakeholders

Around 70 stakeholders reflecting the diverse interests within the area including Thanet District Council and town councillors, the local constabulary, local nature conservation bodies, local residents, water user groups, local hoteliers and commercial bodies associated with the harbour.

Funder

English Nature

Budget

£30,000

Timescale

May 1998 - June 1999

The Environment Council's Facilitation Team

Jeff Bishop, BDOR

Frances Maynard, CEDR

Jo Stanbury, The Environment Council

Schia Mitchell, The Environment Council

What was the project about?

The geological features of the Thanet Coast are an important natural resource which supports an unusual marine fauna and large numbers of over-wintering coastal birds.

Within the area there are a large number of nature conservation designations (including a Special Protection Area, RAMSAR site, Site of Special Scientific Interest and in addition 22 miles of the coast have been declared a candidate Special Area of Conservation). The area has also been granted 'Objective 2' status (an EU designation which refers to the area's poor economic development and its need for economic regeneration).

The trigger for this project was the statutory requirement on English Nature to produce a management scheme for the Europe marine site. However, English Nature recognised that there were three main interests in the Thanet Coast. These being:

- nature conservation
- tourism and recreation
- infrastructure and commercial uses

Tackling these three elements would involve the same stakeholders and English Nature used the opportunity to its maximum benefit by considering matters beyond what was necessary for the management scheme. Therefore the overall aims of the process where to:

- draft a management scheme for the nature conservation interest
- identify and resolve conflict between different human activities
- seek to generate new ways of using the coast which could lead to jobs and contribute to economic generation.

What was involved in the Stakeholder Dialogue process?

The dialogue process consisted of four workshops held at regular intervals throughout the year with approximately 70 stakeholders attending each workshop. Although the basic structure of the workshops remained the same, changing circumstances led to quite different phases, tasks and outcomes from those anticipated.

Along the lines of The Environment Council's Local Capacity Building initiative, a team from the area were trained in basic facilitation skills prior to the workshop in order that they could facilitate small groups.

The Process Plan (below) illustrates the sequence of tasks. The first stage involved assigning a Core Group of key stakeholders who were responsible for the detailed planning of each workshop.

Group/Workshop	Task/Achievements
Core Group	• gain commitment to the project • establish expectations of the process • draft aims and objectives • define the goals of the workshops
Workshop 1 Developing shared understanding of the project	• Identification and sharing of issues • Initial prioritisation of important issues • Sharing of information, and identification of information needed
Workshop 2 Generating ideas for the Coastal Action Plan and the statutory based Management Scheme	Ideas and draft policies were tested against emerging nature conservation policies and current and possible future user conflicts. By this stage there were: • some overall principles in place, • some conservation objectives, • many ideas for future action, • some pre-existing regeneration objectives; and • an understanding of both the scope of the Management Scheme and its detailed content.
Workshop 3 Further development of ideas	• Generation, testing, evaluation, long-listing and short-listing of possible solutions for the Coastal Action Plan. • A specific project proposal emerged - a possible 'Marine Park'. • Further development of the Management Scheme - agreeing wording, noting omissions, developing Codes of Practice
Workshop 4 Signing off the Management Scheme	• Sign off the Management Scheme for its finalisation and formal consultation • Practical and achievable overall plan/strategy for the Marine Park • Identification of future actions • Evaluation of the stakeholder dialogue process and what it achieved

What were the outcomes and benefits of the process?

Original expectations were dramatically exceeded. The Management Scheme is likely to be adopted well ahead of any other similar schemes in the UK. The initially rather abstract Coastal Action Plan became a genuine, practical initiative.

- Many aspects of the supposed conflict between environmental and socio-economic issues were resolved positively.
- Careful exposure to, and introduction of, technical and procedural issues related to the Management Scheme, enabled non-scientific individuals to make positive and practical contributions to it.
- A decision supported by all key stakeholders to go ahead with the Marine Park.

Why was a Stakeholder Dialogue process used?

There are a number of key advantages to adopting this approach. These include:

- Results being achieved more quickly than from employing traditional methods of consultation.
- Local people and agency officials able to meet and talk constructively, building relationships and partnerships for the future.
- The final management plan, although officially published by English Nature, is 'owned' by all those who contributed.
- The Thanet area continuing to benefit from the local facilitation capacity following the training provided by The Environment Council. This is particularly relevant as there is now local commitment to similar ways of working in the future.

"I am happy to admit that I am convinced that stakeholder dialogue works. It does solve many of the problems associated with our usual way of holding meetings and involving those affected by decisions. The principles and practice are widely applicable, not just for large complex situations."

Diana Pound, *Conservation Officer, Maritime Group, English Nature*

The Local Facilitation Team included staff from:

English Nature
Thanet District Council
Environment Agency
Kent County Council

Input to the case study from:

English Nature

Jeff Bishop, *Process consultant, BDOR*

Jo Stanbury, *Project Co-ordinator, The Environment Council*

Contact the Stakeholder Dialogue Projects Team on **0207 632 0117**
for more information on sustainable environmental decision making including process management, facilitation training, and the Local Capacity Building initiative

The Environment Council

212 High Holborn
London WC1V 7VW

tel 020 7836 2626

fax 020 7242 1180

email info@envcouncil.org.uk

www.the-environment-council.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 294075

The Environment Council

Appendix G

Photo-report from Thanet Coast Planning Meeting 8th April 1998

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOLVE
an undertaking of
THE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

English Nature
THANET COAST PLANNING MEETING

8 April 1998

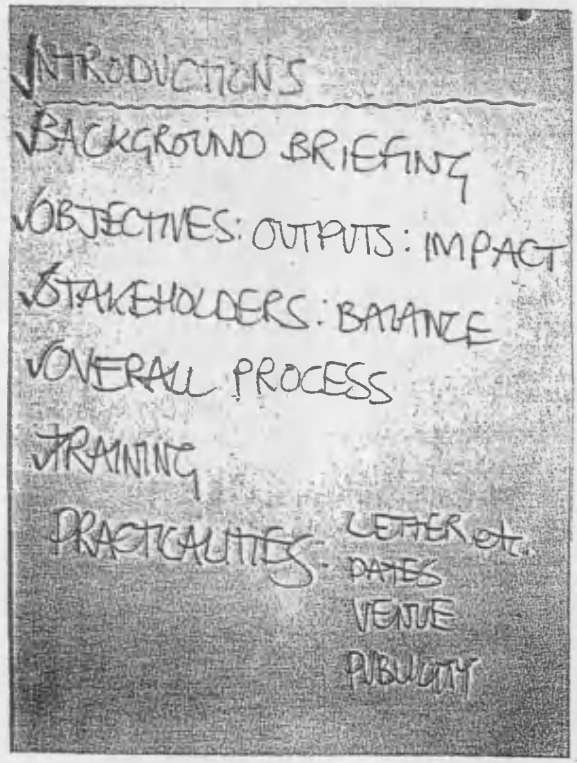
PHOTO-REPORT

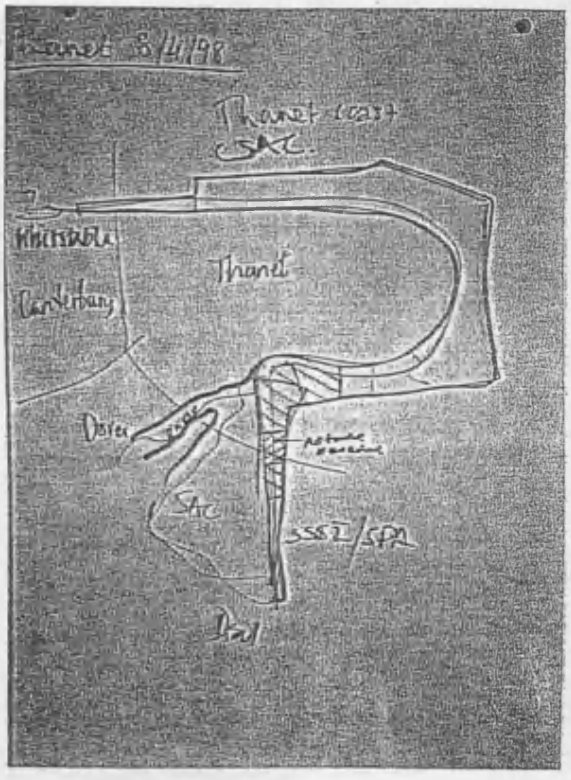
The Environment Council
212 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7VW

Tel: +44-171-836-2626
Fax: +44-171-242-1180

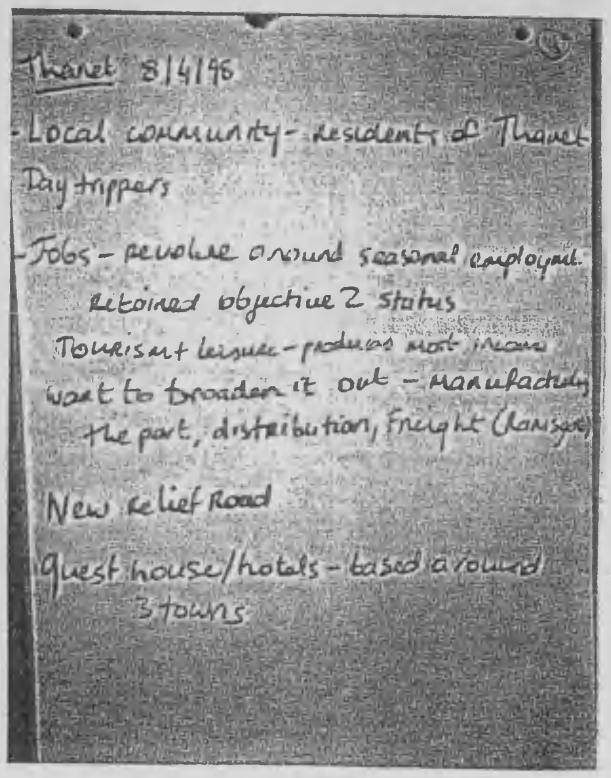
If you have any comments or queries regarding this photo-report please contact Schia Mitchell (Direct line: +44-171-632-0119)

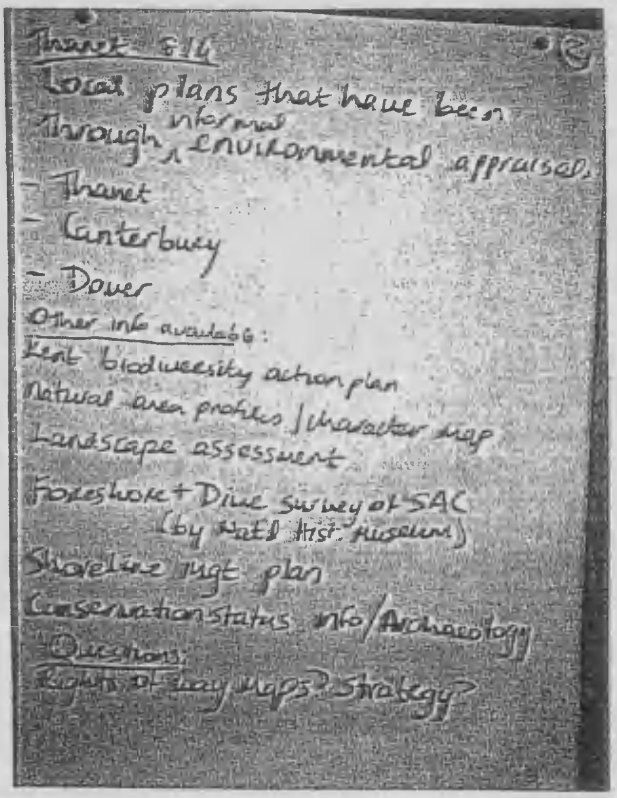
Date of issue: 14 April 1998

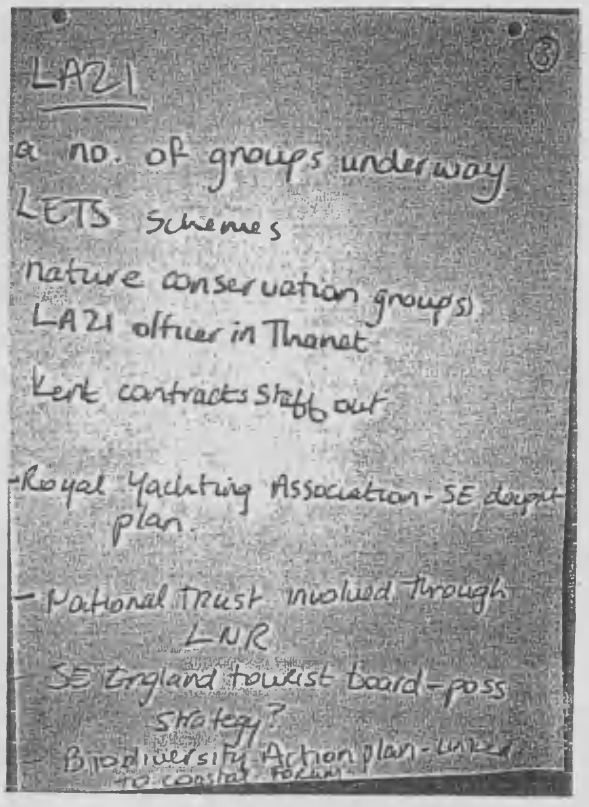


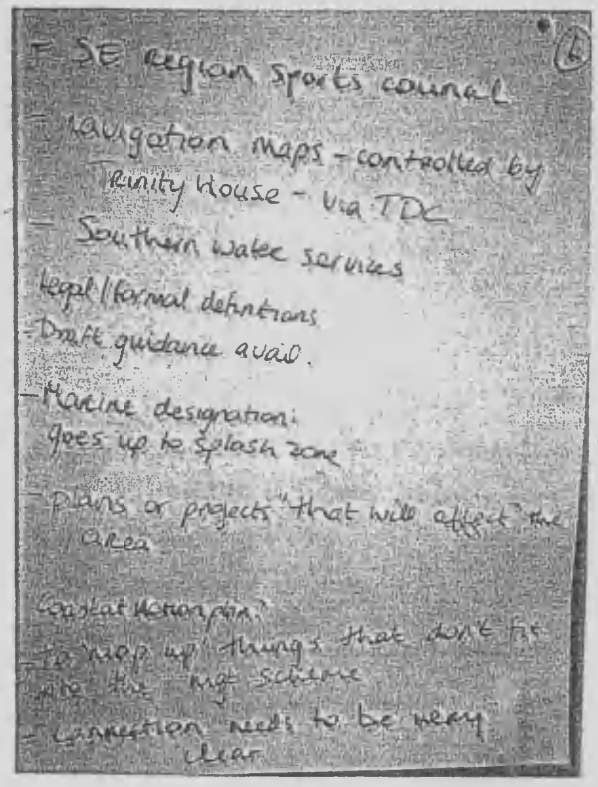


Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	1
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Agenda and Map		

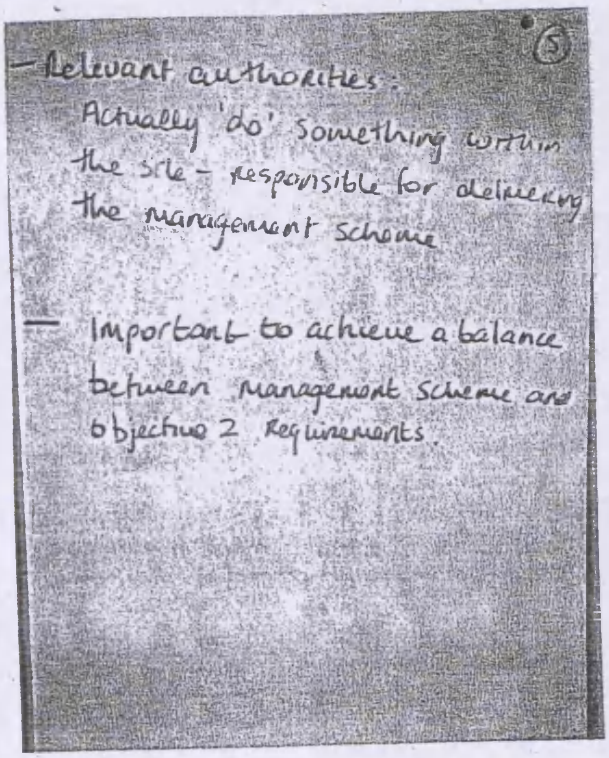


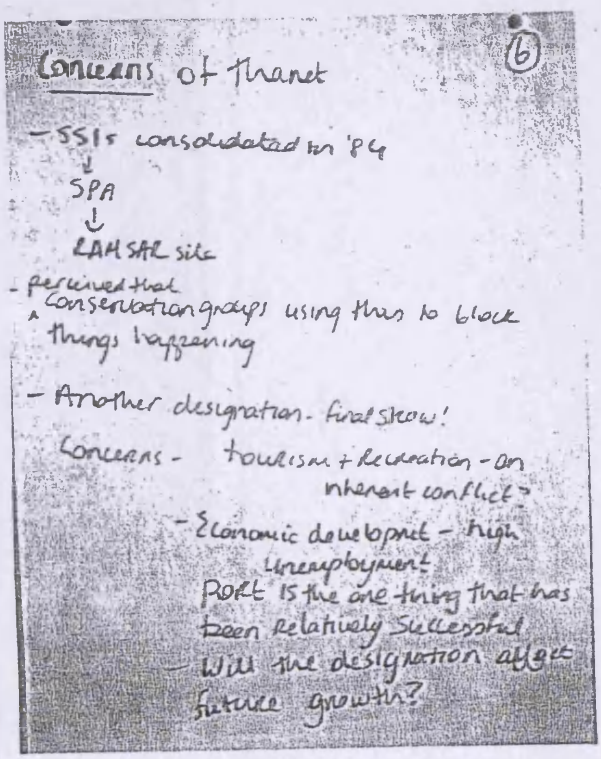


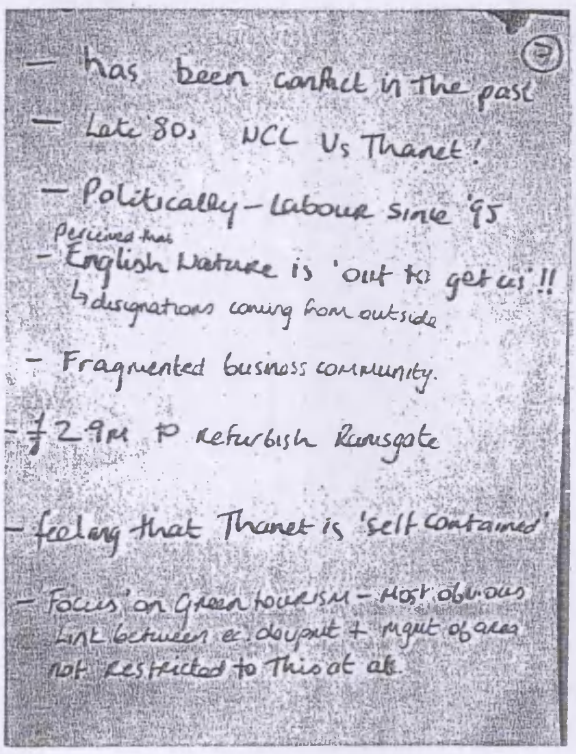


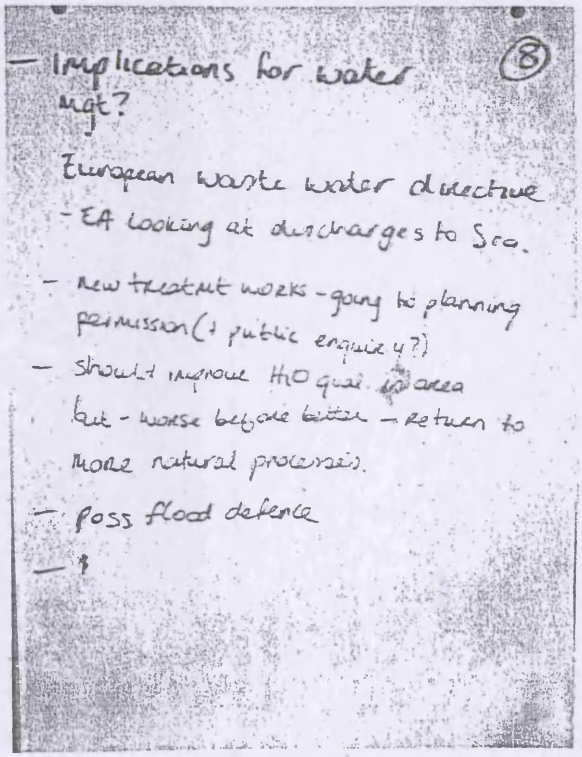


Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	2
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Background briefing		

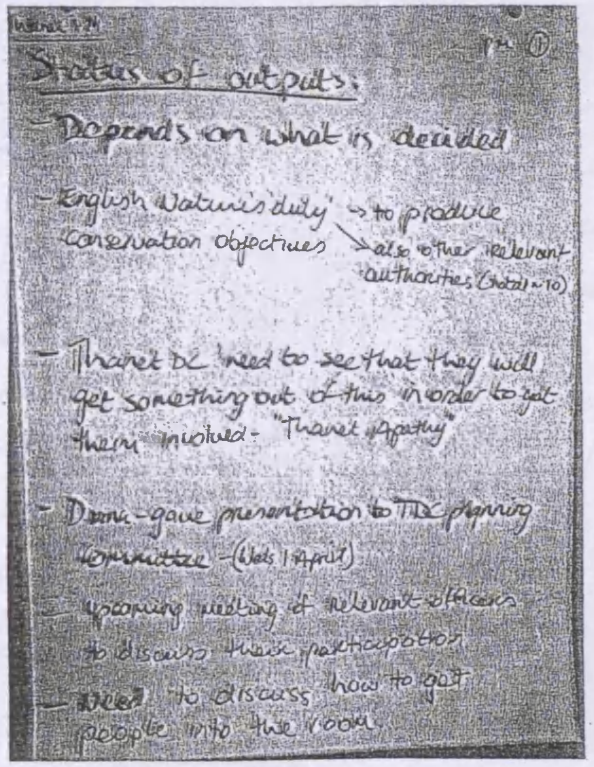






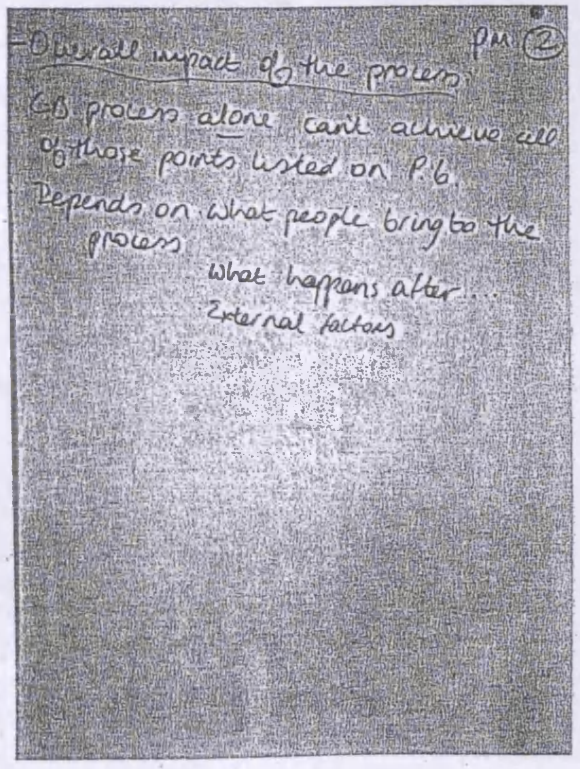


Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	3
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Background briefing continued		



Status of outputs:

- Depends on what is decided
- English Nature's duty' → to produce conservation objectives → also other relevant authorities (total ~10)
- Thanet DC need to see that they will get something out of this in order to get them involved - "Thanet Apathy"
- Dave - gave presentation to TDC planning committee - (Weds 1 April)
- Upcoming meeting of relevant officers to discuss their participation
- Need to discuss how to get people into the room



- Overall impact of the process:

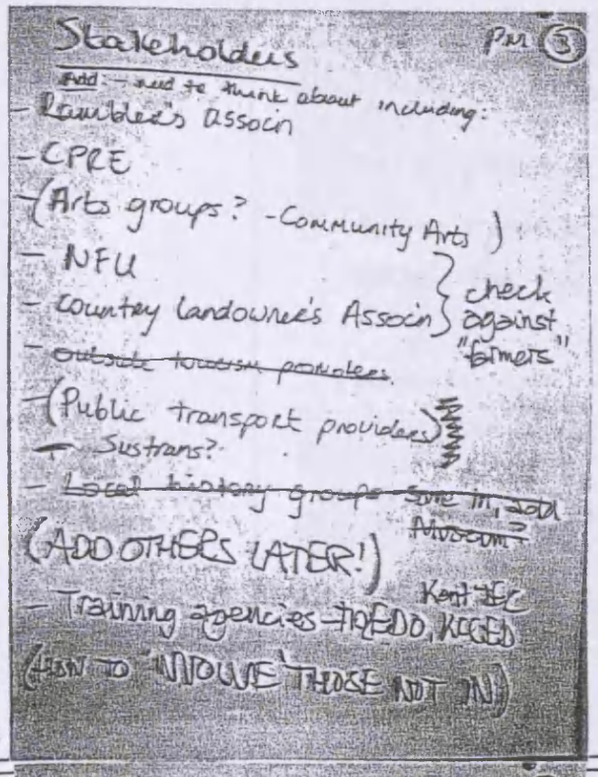
E.g. process alone can't achieve all of those points listed on P.6

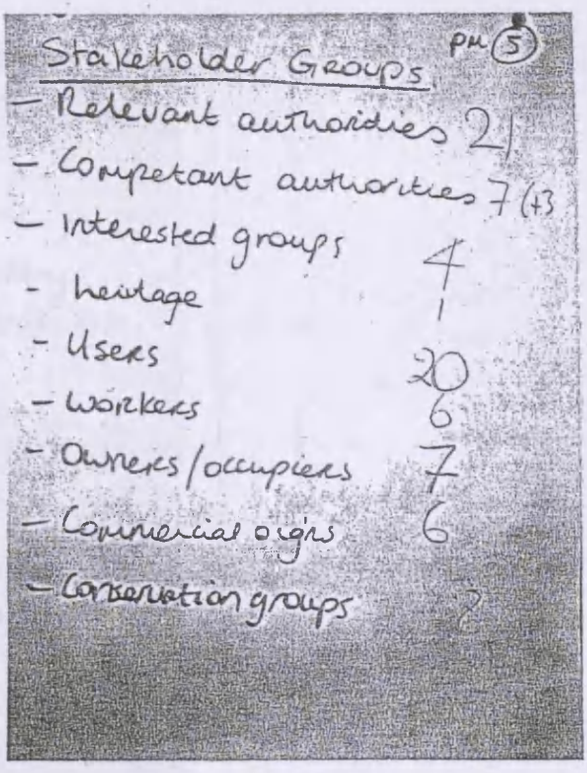
Depends on what people bring to the process

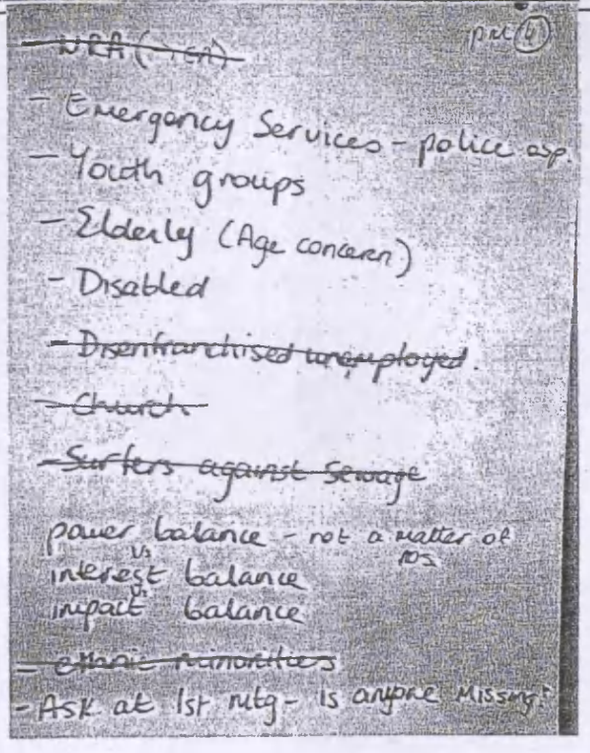
What happens after...

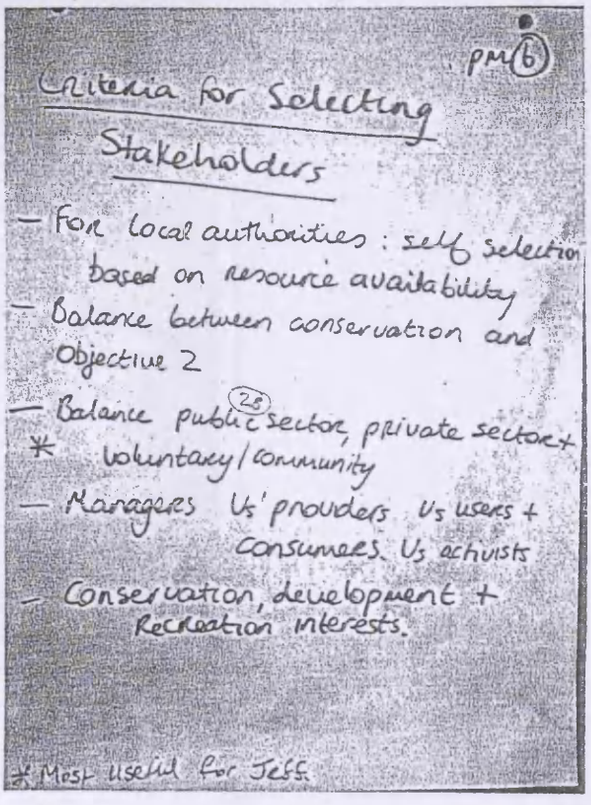
External factors

Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	4
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Objectives, outputs and impact		

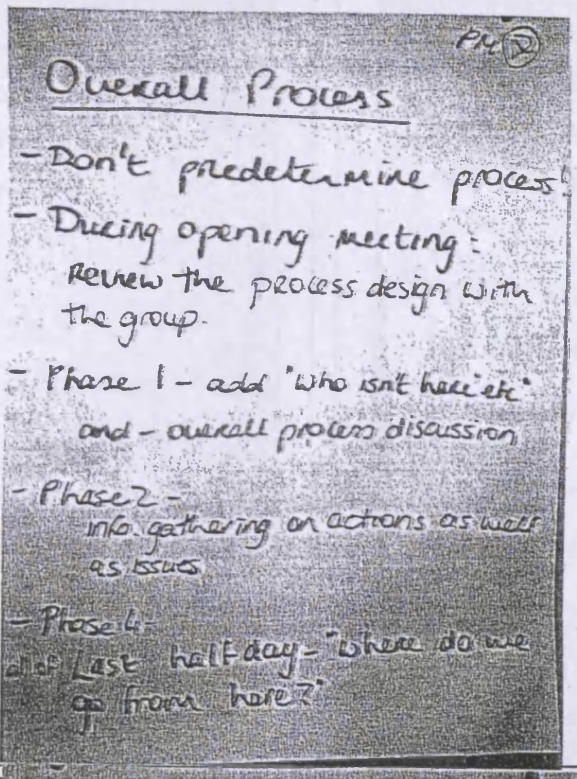






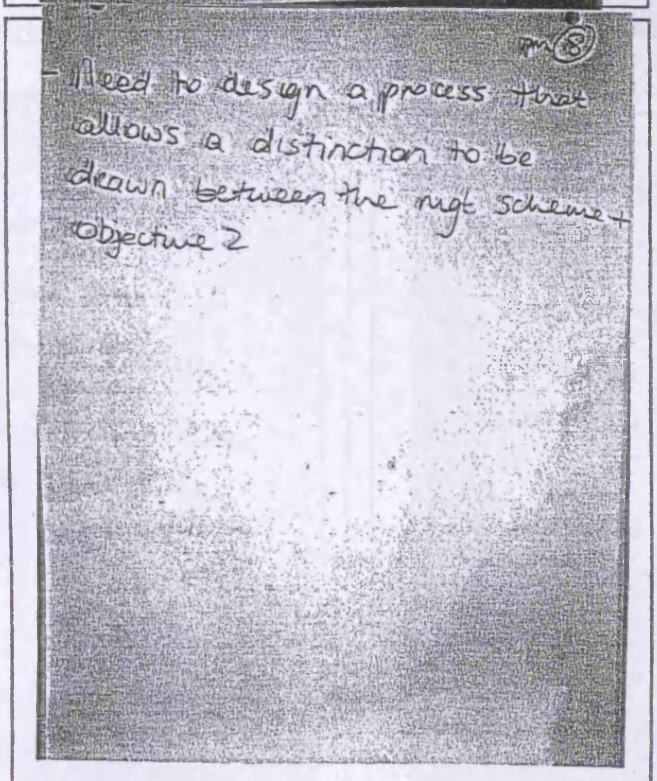


Date 8 April 1998	Project Thanet Coast	Page 5
Group Core group	Subject Stakeholders	



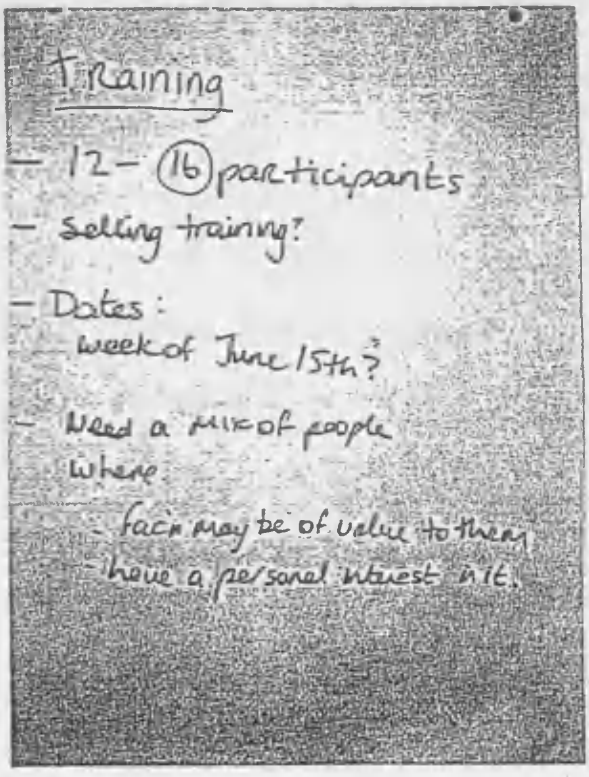
Overall Process

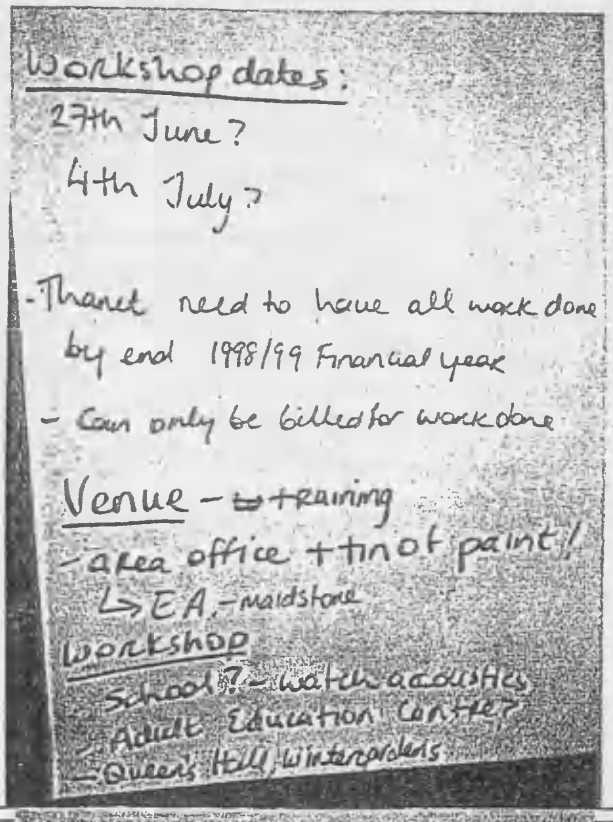
- Don't predetermine process
- During opening meeting:
  Review the process design with the group.
- Phase 1 - add 'who isn't here' etc and - overall process discussion
- Phase 2 -
  info gathering on actions as well as issues
- Phase 4 -
  Last half day - 'where do we go from here?'

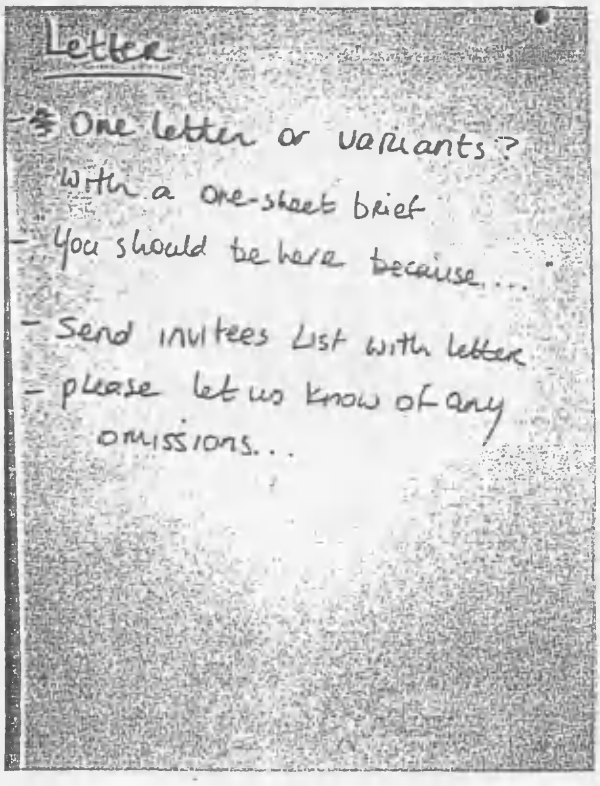


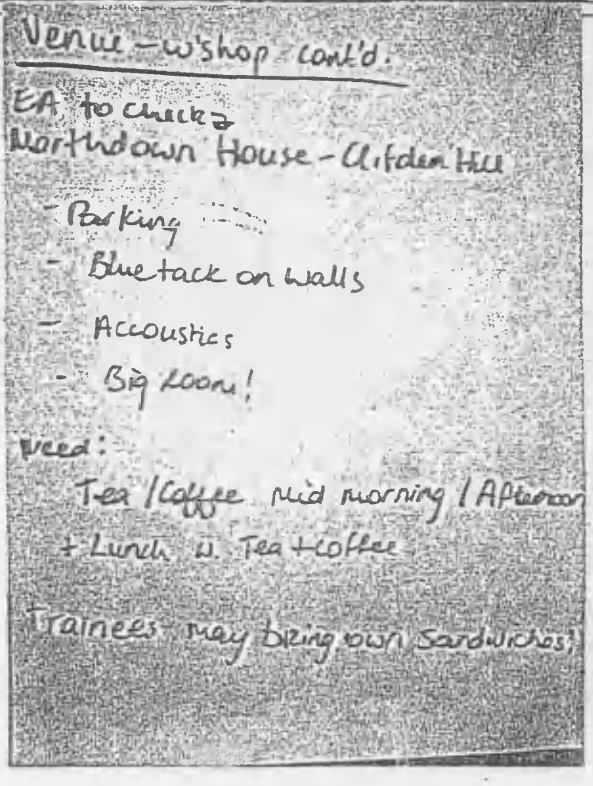
- Need to design a process that allows a distinction to be drawn between the mgt scheme + objective 2

Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	6
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Overall process		









Date	8 April 1998	*Project*	Thanet Coast	*Page*	7
Group	Core group	*Subject*	Training, letter and workshop arrangements		

Publicity

- 'None!' – Jeff
- Objective 2 wanted to know if this would be publicised
- Newsletter between workshops
- Discuss publicity at the 1st workshop
- Publicity for the training is OK

ACTIONS

What	Who	When
Produce a map of Thanet with all of the designations	Diana	end April
Structure plan, local plans → Jeff + tourism strategy + Development + Adrian	Andrew + Adrian	end April
Jeff to see draft guidance re regulations	Diana	end April
Find out about regional Development Agency	Andrew	end April
Jeff to liaise w. Chris + Adrian re talks with TDC	Jeff	End April
Jeff – Design of 1st workshop	Jeff	end April
Jobbie Littlie	Jeff	end April
Confirm 1'shop + training Dates	Jeff	13/4
Confirm participants for TRAINING	Done	Done

What	Who	When
Find out about Admin Support	Adrian	9/4/98
Draft, Letter + brief for workshop (invitation)	Jeff	end April (1st draft)
Find a Room f. W'shop Check w. Rosalie 1st!	TDC – Chris + Adrian	9/4
Photorept	Sonia	20/4
Check workshop dates don't clash w. World Cup!	Chris	end April

Date	8 April 1998	Project	Thanet Coast	Page	8
Group	Core group	Subject	Publicity and action list		

Appendix H

Contract details for the facilitation of the participatory process at Thanet

Contact details. Post

Thanet Coast - An asset for all?

Consensus building for a sustainable future for the Thanet Coast

1. Background

a. Nature Conservation

The Thanet Coast is an important natural resource for geological features, unusual assemblages of marine plants and animals associated with the chalk reefs and cliffs, and large numbers of overwintering coastal birds as well as populations of breeding little tern. The features and wildlife of the Thanet Coast are of international importance as illustrated by the range of nature conservation designations applied to the area:

- Site of Special Scientific Interest for geological exposures, marine life and birds;
- Special Protection Area (SPA) and Wetland of International Importance for wintering and breeding birds (RAMSAR Site);
- A candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) for marine life associated with chalk caves and reefs.

The SPA and the cSAC geographically overlap each other and together form a single European marine site. This stretches along the coast for about 28 miles and the cSAC extends out to sea for approximately 2 km.

The European marine site

The European marine site is to have a statutory management scheme to ensure the maintenance of the features of European importance and take account of socio-economic and cultural factors so that the coast can be used in a sustainable way.

A management group has been set up comprising the relevant authorities who exercise powers or functions in the European marine site area. The management group have met several times over 1997 and have together agreed that they would like to use the process of consensus building to put together the content of the management scheme. In the order of 70 to 80 stakeholders have been identified.

English Nature, who are at present taking the management group forward, have recognised that concentrating on the management scheme for the European marine site alone will not address the underlying concerns of local people and Thanet District Council, and will not therefore illicit the support which the management scheme will need to be effective.

b. Tourism, recreation and employment

The primary concern for the District is that economic regeneration should take place. Thanet district has been given European Objective 2 status due to the high levels of unemployment and in recognition that it is in economic decline. It is one of only 2 such areas in the south-east.

As a result of past history the conservation designations are perceived as a hindrance to the economic development of the area. Of particular concern is the development of the tourism base on which much of the local economy depends.

It is therefore intended that the consensus building process should also seek to generate ideas for new tourism and coastal recreation initiatives that may lead to job creation.

c. Coastal Action Plan

As well as having a high nature conservation interest and supporting high levels of tourism and recreation other interests in the coast include

- a commercial port and several harbours
- commercial fishing
- maintenance of infrastructure such as seawalls, piers, slipways and buoys.
- Coastal process and coastal protection
- water quality issues.

This complex pattern of use results in real and perceived conflicts of interest. Thanet District Council has for some time recognised the need for a coastal action plan, to address these issues and explore the potential of the coast, but to date have not had the resources to proceed with this.

To a large extent the need for a coastal action plan has been supplanted by the cSAC management scheme however there are likely to be some issues that become evident through consensus building which it would be more appropriate to cover in a separate action plan.

In summary there are three areas of work which would bring together the same stakeholders;

a. the management scheme for the European marine site

b. the generation of tourism and recreation initiatives that lead to jobs

c. the content for a coastal action plan which covers matters which fall outside the management scheme.

As a result of this it is sensible that all three areas are tackled in the same consensus building process.

2. Objectives

- To design a consensus building process that involves approximately 70 stakeholders
- To facilitate the above in both plenary and small group activities.
- To assist the participants in generating mutually acceptable solutions to tackle the issues identified
- To provide the forum for creative thinking to generate ideas for new sustainable coastal tourism and recreation initiatives which can be taken forward and lead to new jobs.
- To facilitate the generation of mutually acceptable wording for the main management scheme policies and the coastal action plan.
- To facilitate the generation of mutual understanding between different users and thereby maximise the support for and implementation of the agreed actions.
- To facilitate the best possible resolution of conflicts between different users of the site.

3. Programme of work

The programme of work will be as follows;

- The contractors will attend a meeting with a core group of the relevant authorities to be briefed on the background, design with the core group the most appropriate macro process design, and review the list of stakeholders with the focus on power balancing.
- They will advise on the composition of the letter briefing and inviting participants and advising organisations on the type of participant to represent their interests.
- Advise on the characteristics of a suitable venue
- Carry out detailed micro process design.
- Prepare for the all day workshops involving all the stakeholders
- Brief speakers as necessary to ensure focussed presentations
- Facilitate the consensus building meetings using a range of participative techniques such as, nominal group technique, plenary sessions, small group work, feed back sessions, metaplan exercises, brainstorming, common grounding and the 'carousel'.
- Make detailed photo report of the sessions and provide a well structured and clear, typed version of the contents.

4.Time Scale/ Schedule of work.

Suggested timetable (NB;For funding reasons it is vital that the process is completed within the financial year 1998/99.)	
Put Consensus Building contract out to tender	February week 1
Tender submission date	February week 3
Contract let	March Week 1
First meeting with consultants for briefing and starting work on the process design.	March Week 2/3
Lead in time prior to first workshop during which macro - process will be designed and detailed design of first workshop, stakeholders are told about process and drawn into participating	March - May/June
*First stakeholder workshop	May/June
*Second stakeholder workshop	September
*Third stakeholder workshop	December
*Final stakeholder workshop	February/March
Bids for new coastal/marine tourism and recreation initiatives written and presented. Write up of action plan, and management scheme	1999

*This macro process is based on the idea that there will be four all day workshops involving all stakeholders but it is possible that an alternative format may be considered a better option. The exact design of the macro process will be agreed between the management group and the consultants on the basis of what is the most effective way of working with in the order of 70-80 stakeholders covering such a wide area.

What ever the macro process that is decided upon it is likely to follow the general pattern given below:

Preparation Phase

- The macro process to be designed with the management group.
- Stakeholders asked to participate via a letter and meetings where necessary

Phase 1.

- Clarification of peoples expectations of the process
- Briefing of the participants on the background to the European marine site, the aim to generate new tourism and leisure initiatives and the coastal action plan.
- The purpose of consensus building and what will be expected from participants.
- Ground rules generated and agreed
- Listing of issues, concerns and information gaps.

- Action agreed

Phase 2

- Information gathering on issues
- Information exchange and clarification.
- Development of a range of solutions to issues, possible new tourism initiatives, and possible wording for management/action plans.
- Action agreed

Phase 3

- Information gathering on the solutions, initiatives and wording.
- Information exchange and clarification.
- Mutually acceptable options selected for implementation or further working up
- Action agreed.

Phase 4

- Selected options refined and worked up ready for final approval.
- Final presentation of options (solutions, wording and initiative)
- Clarification over any remaining issues
- Agreement over who does what and by when for actions to be implemented
- Agreement over publicity and the launching strategy for various outputs
- Tying up of lose ends
- Decisions over where to from here.
- Commitment to agreed actions.

5. Resource Provision by Contractor

The contractor shall supply:

- A lead facilitator of proven experience.
- Small group facilitators.
- All paper, pens, bluetack, flipchart paper, and other materials needed in the process.
- 2 Photo and typed reports following the meetings

6. Resource Provision by Management Group

- A background information booklet on European Marine Sites and management schemes for stakeholders

- Administration of the invitations to participate to all stakeholders
- Expert advice from all the relevant authorities at each of the all day workshops
- Venue hire and provision of refreshments
- The copying and dissemination of the typed photo reports

7. Outputs of the Consensus Building

- creative ideas for new sustainable coastal tourism and recreation initiatives which create new jobs
- the content for a well supported and implementable management scheme for the Thanet European marine site. This leading to the sustainable management of approx 28 miles of coast (including the 600 ha of intertidal land within the Thanet Coast cSAC) and additional marine area which extends up to 2.3 km off shore.
- the content of an action plan to bring about the implementation of the collaboratively agreed activities and actions which fall outside the management scheme

8. The overall impact of the process

The project will have a major impact in the way that people view the coast, it will increase understanding within the community of each users aspirations and needs, it will improve users understanding of the value of the natural features, it will create new partnerships, develop relationships and result in creative new solutions to the existing issues and conflicts.

It will:

- Ensure that any projects that are taken forward as a result of Phase one are viable from an environmental perspective and take proper account of the needs of other users of the coast
- Give clear guidance for those who want to take forward projects which affect the coast in the future so saving time
- Minimise conflict between user groups and between users and the natural environment.
- Increase sustainable use of the coast
- Result in community empowerment

9. Tender details

The tender should include the following details:

- Details of previous experience of using a consensus building approach for environmental decision making and references for previous work of this nature that has been carried out
- The cost of process design for the macro process including meetings with the core group and review of stakeholder list and advice on letter of invitation
- Preparation time for facilitated meetings
- The cost of providing personnel (person days)
- Expenses (EN travel and subsistence rates will apply)
- The number of workshop day meetings and other meetings you believe are required (the actual number of days will be agreed in discussion with the core group subject to funding), and the cost of each workshop.
- The cost of preparing and producing outputs.
- Other expenses of the process as appropriate.

Please note that the final quote should be shown both including and excluding VAT and care should be taken to only add VAT to costs where this is necessary (eg accommodation is exempt).

10. Payment

Payment will be made on the following stages:

- Stage 1 - on completion of the macro process design and receipt of the first photo and typed report from the first all day workshop,
- stage 2 - on receipt of the final photo and typed report following the last all day workshop.

You should submit invoices showing the number of days work completed so far.

11. Reporting procedures

The contract will be managed and coordinated by English Nature who will set up a steering/core group of relevant authorities with a statutory responsibility for the area to oversee the work.

The EN nominated project officer is Diana Pound, Kent Team EN

The contractor will not make any changes to the strategy without prior approval from nominated

officers..

12. Appendix

Stakeholders with Statutory Responsibility.

English Nature
Dover District Council
Kent County Council
Southern Water Services
Sandwich Port & Haven Commissioners
Thanet District Council
Canterbury District Council
Environment Agency
Margate Pier and Harbour Company
Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee.

Stakeholders with an interest in the marine and coastal environment.

Port Ramsgate
Fore Water Ski Club
Mindis/Broad stairs Yacht Club
The Sports Council
Shore Fishing
Personal water craft users
School/University field trips
Countryside Commission
English Heritage
National Trust
Princes Golf Club
Kent Wildlife Trust
Kent Marine Group
Thanet Countryside Trust
Thanet Nature Conservation Umbrella Group
Ecological Experts
Beach Concessionaires
Mindis Wind Surfing Club
The Royal Temple Yacht Club
Divers Clubs
Small Boat Angling
Baitdiggers
Personal Watercraft Users
MAFF
Town Councils
Crown Commissioners
Private Landowners

Local Agenda 21
RSPB
British Trust for Ornithology
Fishermans Associations
Hotelier Groups
East Kent Maritime Trust
BMIF
Thanet Civic Trust
Locals
Other Groups as identified.

15. Background to EN and the European Designations.

Under the Environment Protection Act 1990 the functions of English Nature (legally known as the Nature Conservancy Council for England) are the establishment, maintenance and management of nature reserves in England, the provision of advice for Ministers on the development and implementation of policies for, or affecting, nature conservation in England, the provision of advice and the dissemination of knowledge about nature conservation and the commissioning or supporting of relevant research. English Nature also has power to undertake certain research and to pay grants to other bodies for nature conservation projects.

The 1992 EC Habitats Directive aims to establish a series of protected areas at sea and on land - *Natura 2000* areas. These sites will be designated Special Areas of Conservation where they support certain natural habitats or species, or Special Protection Areas which support significant numbers of wild birds. Where SAC's or SPA's have a marine interest they are referred to as European marine sites. Some of the UK's best marine sites have already been identified by EN and submitted to the European Commission for consideration as Special Areas of Conservation.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 translates the Habitat Directive into UK legislation. The Regulations make provision for a management scheme to be developed for each European marine site where this is appropriate.

The Thanet Coast has been selected as a candidate SAC. The citation and maps for the site are attached. The features of interest are the chalk reef habitat and chalk caves. The SSSI citation is also attached as this provides more information on the intertidal. The intertidal area is part of an SPA designated for both wintering and summer birds.

At Thanet the cSAC and the SPA geographically overlap and are considered together as a single European marine site and the management scheme will cover the full area although not necessarily with the same level of detail.

Appendix I

Invitation letter and supporting handout for the first Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue workshop.

ENGLISH NATURE

Kent Team
The Countryside Management Centre,
Coldharbour Farm, Wye, Ashford, Kent TN25 5DB
Telephone (01233) 812525 Fax (01233) 812520

[redacted]

9 June 1998

Dear [redacted]

Thanet Coast - An Asset for All

We are writing to invite you to come along, or send a representative, to join a challenging initiative of central importance to the future use, development and management of the Thanet coastline.

Following recent changes, the whole of the Thanet coast is now subject to careful controls in terms of all aspects of nature conservation. At the same time, the area is also receiving special European funding to help regenerate the local economy. If not managed carefully, there could well be a conflict between these two themes. Alternatively, by bringing everybody together, as we intend to do in this project, some creative and valuable approaches may develop that help both nature conservation **and** the local economy. That is why your involvement would be so important to all of us managing the initiative, which includes not just English Nature but also the District and County councils, and fishery and port interests.

Details of the project and the process which we are inviting you to join are outlined on the attached sheet. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at the English Nature offices but, most importantly, please can we encourage you to send back the attached form with a positive response and register in for 18 July. That way you can be sure that you and your voice are heard in - and make a positive difference to - crucial discussions that can affect your future.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

pp [redacted]
Conservation Officer

Enc

THANET COAST - AN ASSET FOR ALL?
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

You may already be aware that there are many features of special nature conservation interest around the Thanet coast. This includes important populations of certain bird species, specialised plants and animals, and rare habitats - some of international importance. The coast is covered by 3 existing conservation designations and another is proposed. Because 2 of these designations stem from European Directives, the coast - along 28 miles and from 2-4 kilometres from the shore - is described as a '**European marine site**'.

All this is happening in an area which is also subject to a completely different European designation - it has '**Objective 2**' status because of the high local levels of unemployment. Since regeneration is certain to involve emphasis on ports, fisheries and tourism activities there is a direct connection to how the coast will be managed under the conservation Directives.

English Nature and others now have to start work to produce a conservation-focused 'management scheme' for the European marine site. At the same time Thanet District Council and others are making progress on economic development work which could well generate pressures for change along the coastline and at the ports and harbours.

Bringing together and balancing environmental, social and economic pressures is a key aim for what is now termed '**sustainable development**' - a theme being pushed hard by the current government. What is also central to the principles of sustainability is an emphasis on <u>how</u> decisions are taken; with the focus very much on joint working, partnership and consensus.

As a result, English Nature and Thanet District Council (along with the other agencies) are adopting a '**consensus building**' approach to developing a single, combined and inclusive management scheme for the Thanet coast. This is the initiative we hope very much that you will join, because truly effective, long-lasting and balanced solutions are only possible when all the key groups and organisations are involved all the way through the development of any plan or project.

The initiative is complicated, ambitious and quite lengthy, and also something of a 'first' for all involved. The only certainty is that if one or two groups go off alone to draw up their own separate plans then either the distinctive natural environment or the coastal economy will be at risk, to nobody's benefit in the end. Your involvement is therefore of critical importance to ensure that <u>your</u> **concerns and interests, as well as your skills and ideas** are brought firmly and clearly to the 'table' and help to inform a better, balanced and achievable end plan.

Although the letter invites you to the opening event on Saturday 18th July, the whole process is likely to involve another 3 meetings over the subsequent 8 months, slowly working towards agreement in detail. The events will be managed by independent outsiders with proven experience in helping mixed groups develop creative, shared agreement. Events will be extremely carefully planned to be active, practical and participative, and hence ensure that everybody makes an open, full and equal contribution. **Please join us.**

Appendix J

Supporting handout from Workshop 4 of the Thanet Coast Stakeholder Dialogue process.

THANET COAST - AN ASSET FOR ALL?
WORKSHOP FOUR - WHAT, HOW, WHO?

LAST ORDERS!

We promised a different style of event this time, and there's a lot to do; (hence the two extra half hours). This is also a very important meeting because it's both an end and a beginning. First of all, we want to close off our joint work on the Management Scheme - the bedrock framework for ensuring conservation of the coastal environment. Then we want to start setting some vision, strategies and action plans for the possible 'Marine Park' - the exciting replacement for the Coastal Action Plan we had looked at earlier.

This note is an elaborated programme which aims to help you track through what will be a full day. There will of course be introductions, handouts and written briefs at the workshop, and some from our pool of facilitators will again be there to help.

*The morning focuses on the **MANAGEMENT SCHEME.***

As you arrive (please be there a little before 9.30 if you possibly can) we'll be asking you to sign up to form your own groups for two sessions: one to generate final comments on the **Management Schemer as a whole** (revised copy enclosed) and the other on detailed **codes of practice** for some specific issues or places where conflicts may arise.

Apart from some general **introductions**, group work on these two aspects will take up a good part of the morning, finishing with a plenary **discussion of key points.**

To take us up to lunch (same caterers again!) there will be two short sessions to summarise our work as a whole. We'll hear about **everything goes forward** from now and then invite you to (a) tell us whether or how much you **support the Management Scheme** and then (b) **evaluate all our work together.**

*The afternoon focuses on the possible **COASTAL/MARINE PARK.***

We start with a careful **introduction** to explain how the Marine Park idea has emerged and how it might move forward into action.

Then there are two group work sessions (we'll mix the groups this time). First we use an unusual method to allow you to tackle complex questions about an **overall strategy** for the park, incorporating many of the ideas you yourselves have generated. Then we will ask your group to choose an exciting, up-front project to think through in terms of an **action plan.**

That takes us to our final session when we will look ahead to the **next stages** for the Marine Park. We will finish for 4.30.

See you on the 7th!
[redacted] *and colleagues*

19.5.99

Appendix K

Example of an interview schedule for the Thanet coast interviews and supporting table of possible outputs from successful participatory process.

Interview Schedule Final Draft

Background: Help develop a richer understanding of the context the workshops occurred in.

- **What methods or approaches to public involvement in decision-making does the Tourism & Leisure department normally take when involved in consulting the public?**

- **How was the Tourism & Leisure department involved in the siting of previous conservation designations - SSSI, SPA, Ramsar?**

- **What were your thoughts on hearing that a fifth designation was planned for the Thanet coast? Why was this?**

⇒ Did you foresee there being problems regarding this new designation?

- **How did you hear about the designation - who informed you?**

⇒ What did you understand the role of your department to be upon hearing of these designations?

⇒ How were you involved in the build up to the workshops and the workshops themselves?

- **As a Relevant Authority what responsibilities did TDC have?**

- **Can you explain the thinking behind the objection to the designation that was lodged by Thanet District Council?**

- **Before you took part in the workshops what was your opinion of such events?**

⇒ Where did these opinions come from?

- **Why do you think that this type of approach to decision making was used?**

⇒ What did you understand the process to involve?

⇒ How do you think this differs from previous decision making techniques used in Thanet?

⇒ Do you think the issue required a different approach to decision making than what might have been used in the past?

- **What did both you and those you represent hope to get from your participation in the process?**

⇒ Who did you represent?

General Questions

- **What do you think came out of the workshops?**

⇒ What would you have liked to have seen come out the workshops?

⇒ What do you feel was/were the most important output the process produced?

⇒ Were you surprised by what came out of the four workshops?

- **How successful do you think the workshops were?**

⇒ Why do you feel this?

⇒ In what way do you feel the process of the participatory workshops wasn't successful?

⇒ What are your current opinions regarding participatory workshops as decision making tools?

- **Who do you feel benefited most from the participatory approach?**

⇒ Why do you feel the process suited them?

Substantive outputs

- **How do you think the interests of yourself and your organisation are reflected in the products of the participatory workshops?**

⇒ Do you feel you have contributed to the products of the workshops?

⇒ Do you feel the products of the workshops reflect your views and opinions?

- **To what extent do you support the outputs and decisions produced by the workshops?**

⇒ Why is it that you do/don't support the products of the workshops?

- **Are you aware of the outputs from the workshops being implemented?**

⇒ Has implementation been quick/what hasn't been implemented?

⇒ What progress has been made on the idea of a **marine park?**

⇒ Do you foresee there being obstacles to implementation?

⇒ Have you been kept informed as to the progress of any implementation?

- **How do you think the products of the process differed from those that might have been produced using a more traditional method?**

⇒ From your experience would you regard the method used in Thanet as an efficient decision making method?

⇒ Do you feel the value of the products achieved by the process outweighed any resource costs?

- **Can you think of examples of how the products of the process would have benefited from additional information?**

⇒ Do you think the workshops considered all the relevant information and opinions?

Intangible products of participation

- **How has your participation in the workshops changed your relationship with the various other stakeholders who were involved?**

⇒ Why do you feel this is?

⇒ Can you give examples of any such change?

⇒ Did your involvement in the workshops alter your opinion of any of the other stakeholders present?

- **Since the participatory workshops does your work bring you into contact with the stakeholders present at these four meetings?**

⇒ Has the way you work with different people changed since the workshops?

- **Since your involvement in these workshops have you been involved in any other similar processes?**

⇒ If not would you get involved if the opportunity arose?

- **Did the workshops introduce you to new information you were previously unaware of?**

⇒ Would you have been able to find out such information other than through these participatory workshops?

Organisational/policy making change

- **Has your involvement in these workshops influenced the way your organisation will go about its decision making practices in the future?**

⇒ What do you think is required for decision making to be participatory?

⇒ How does this differ from consultation?

- **What would be required for Tourism & Leisure to adopt this approach in the future?**

⇒ Can you provide examples of when TDC has adopted a similar approach to that used for the SAC to aid decision making?

⇒ Have you had an opportunity to share your experiences from the workshops within your organisation?

- **Do you feel that your colleagues, who weren't present at the workshops, share any of the benefits you experienced as a result of your participation?**

- **Do you feel that the process used in Thanet will be adopted for future policy making both in the area and wider a field in Kent?**

Direct questions

- **Were you aware of a history of conflict or disagreement between the Local Authority and conservation interests in Thanet?**

Can you suggest anybody you think I ought to speak to?

Is there anything you feel I have missed out, please feel free to say anything else? Thank you very much for your time, would it be possible to maybe follow these questions up at a later date with a chat?

Output criteria of successful participation	Indicators of achievement
Technically sound decisions	The decisions do not fail as a result of technical inaccuracies or ignorance. The decisions have the support of the appropriate experts.
Responsive decision	Do the participants believe the process added value to the decision, were the views of the participants considered in the decision?
Strong agreement	There is no opposition to the implementation of the decisions. Support for the decisions is strong across all those individuals involved in their development.
Implementable decisions	The decisions are easily put into practice, and are actually seen to be delivered. Few, if any changes, are required in order to facilitate their implementation.
Momentum	The decisions are quickly implemented, their impact is monitored, participants continue to meet , challenges to their successful implementation are easily overcome.
Legitimate	There are no legal challenges to the decisions produced through the process
Efficient	The decisions are implemented with little or no opposition, and are done so quickly with the support of all those actors required.
Reciprocal trust	Willingness to share responsibilities, information and to offer time and support in the knowledge it will be returned in time.
Co-operation	Evidence of partnership working across and within sectors. Sharing of information, joint leads on projects.
Mutual education	Greater understanding of the views, and values of others interested in the area. An appreciation of this in current work.
Empowerment	Believe that one can influence local decisions – the removal of any initial skepticism, greater support for participation, involvement in other local decision making opportunities
Ownership	Greater compliance with decisions, understanding over the reasoning for decisions, protective and able to argue their case.
Community development	New networks of communication where previously none existed. Locally instigated projects, greater involvement in local activities, membership of local groups.

Appendix L

Code table from analysis of Thanet case study interviews

Code Title	Explanation	Links/ Influence(d)	Entering/process/context/ Product	Comments (Stakeholder Group)
Active participation of DM	Recognition that participation requires real participation from the decision makers	**Influenced** by the boundaries around the process and the commitment of the DM to the approach. **Influences** sense of manipulation and ownership – negative product influencer	Process	Conservation Interest
Addressing the conflict	Dose the participant feel that the SHD addressed the conflicts that exist along the coast?	**Influenced** – expectations, interests, awareness **Influences** – contribution, benefits, ownership, manipulation.	Process	RA
Aims of process	What was the participants understanding of the aims?	**Influenced** by their interests and how they were introduced to the work. **Influences** expectations, hopes, measures of success	Entering (root code)	Everyone
Awareness of dialogue boundaries	Comments referring to an awareness of boundaries	**Influenced** – by facilitation, contribution, expectations. **Influences** – contribution, ownership.	Context/process	RA + LI +CI
Awareness raising	Comments about the process raising awareness.	**Influenced** by reasons for participation. **Influences** learning, positive statements	Product	
Balance of resources (efficiency)	Comments regarding costs/products	**Influenced** by expectations, background, commitment, resources. **Influences** – willingness to participate again.	Product	
Change in working practices	Comments on how the process might influence future DM by RAs	**Influenced** – benefits, resources, awareness of process and commitment.	Product	
Changing benefits from SHD	Comments referring to the dynamic nature of SHD	**Influenced** – commitment, awareness, momentum,	Product	

	products	power of part. d.m. and outside context/ **Influences** – implementation, willingness to participate again, lasting impression, perceptions of commitment.		
Changing positions of participants	How the process changed the position held by the participant	**Influenced** – views of others, participatory process, facilitation, commitment. **Influences** – decisions, implementation, relationships between groups.	Product	Everyone
Coastal park	Comments on the coastal park idea		Product	
Community awareness	Evidence of learning more about the local people and community	**Influenced** – original awareness, SHD/facilitation. **Influences** – implementation, decision making, relationships	Product	
Community description	Comments describing the Thanet community	**Influenced** – by awareness of participants. **Influences** – expectations, perceptions, process design, commitment to process.	Context	
Conflict along coastline	Descriptions of conflict ranging along the coastline	**Influenced** – history, economic. conservation, personalities. **Influences** – expectations, prejudices, perceptions, learning, relationships.	Context	
Conflict avoidance (containment)	Statements suggesting that the process may have avoided the real conflicts	**Influenced** – reasons for participation, process design, facilitation, management structure and decision makers – power outside. **Influences** – statements of success, implementation.	Process	

Code	*Explanation*	*Influenced & Influences*	*Context/entering/process/ product*	*Stakeholder Group*
Consensus or compromise	Thoughts on whether the process generated consensus or compromise	**Influenced** – interest and background of shd, expectations. **Influences** – benefits, implementation.	Product	Everyone
Conservation and participation	Comments referring to the use of part. for conservation decision making issues.	**Influenced** – complex legal requirements, expectations of participants. **Influences** – potential of the process, likely success.	Context	
Contact between shds	Refers to any contact shds do or do not maintain after the process	**Influenced** - Social networks, momentum, commitment, transformative power of process. **Influences** – SC, implementation, future dm.	Product	
Contribution	Any comments referring to part. sense of contribution, gap between cont. & draft	**Influenced** – process, decision makers, legal context, conservation nature of dialogue. **Influences** – benefits, success, implementation, ownership.	Product	
Councilors and rep democracy	Refers to the representative dem. Shown by councilors	**Influences** – power of process, where decisions occur, commitment, effectiveness, implementation, ownership.	Context	
Cynicism over use of SHD	Stakeholders being cynical in their reasoning for SHD.	**Influenced** – history, contribution, conflict, expectations. **Influences** – expectations, relationships, commitment, perceived benefits.	Entering/context	
Debate over coastal management	Examples of a history of debate regarding coastline.	**Influenced** – local context. **Influences** – expectations, commitment,	Entering/context	

		ownership, relations.		
Delivery of broad aims	Statements referring to the broad aims of the process.	**Influenced** – O2, Habs D., range of stakeholders, context of area. **Influences** – scope, risk, expectations, implementation, ownership.	Entering/process	
Diff. in perceptions of success	How different stakeholders regard the success of other participants	**Influenced** – expectations, boundaries, relations. **Influences** – ownership, implementation, commitment, WTPA.	Product	
Disappointment	Statements referring to disappointment both in process and products	**Influenced** – expectations, facilitation, SHD, scope. **Influences** – WTPA, commitment, ownership, relationships.	Product	
Economic aims and product	Examples of how the economic aims were or were not met by the process.	**Influenced** – commitment, Habs. D., impact on wider DM. **Influences** – disappointment, frustration, WTPA, momentum.	Product	
Economic vs. conservation tension	Description of the historical tension between E & C.	**Influenced** – TDC, local context. **Influences** – process design, boundaries, expectations, products, risk.	Entering	
End thoughts of SHD	Thoughts of participants on SHD once they have participated.	**Influenced** – expectations, products, boundaries, interests. **Influences** – WTPA, ownership, commitment & implementation.	Product	
Expectation of workshops	What the participants expected of the workshops and what they would deliver.	**Influenced** – background, local context – history of debate, experience of DIPs. **Influences** –	Entering	

		commitment, measures of success.		
Expectations not met	Statement suggesting that participant's expectations have not been met.	**Influenced-** boundaries, interests of participants, expectations, commitment. **Influences** – commitment, ownership, implementation, WTPA.	Product	
Experience of DIPs	What experience of DIPs did the participants have?	**Influenced** – previous involvement. **Influences** – expectations, reasons for participation, hopes, commitment to process.	Entering	
Facilitation	Comments on the facilitation or referring to the influence of the facilitation.	**Influenced** – facilitation, experiences of DIPs and expectations. **Influences** – commitment, ownership, measures of success.	Process	
First thoughts on designations	What were the first thoughts of the stakeholders on hearing of the designation.	**Influenced** – interests, understanding of the designation. **Influences** – potential conflict, expectations, WTP.	Entering	
First thoughts on SHD	First thoughts on the use of SHD.	**Influenced** – experience, local political context, interests. **Influences** – expectations, commitment, measures of success.	Entering	
Focus of Project Officer	Comments referring to the work of Tony Child.	**Influenced** – expectations, hopes, the experience of participating, interests. **Influences** – benefits of participation, WTPA.	Product	
Foreness Point	Comments referring to the FPAG	**Influenced** – local concerns/interests.	Context/process	

		Influences – expectations, hopes, measures of success.		
Frustration	Statements referring to the frustration felt by the participants during SHD.	**Influenced** – contribution, facilitation, expectations, boundaries. **Influences** – ownership, commitment, implementation.	Product	
Habitats Directive influence	Comments that relate to the influence of the Habs. D.	**Influences-** boundaries, objectives, purpose. **Influenced** – non local concerns agendas	Context	
Hopes of participants	What the participants hoped the process would deliver.	**Influenced** – experience, expectations, history. **Influences** – expectations, measures of success, commitment.	Entering	
Hoteliers	Comments referring to hoteliers	**Influenced** – economic interests.		
How RAs traditionally engage	Descriptions of how RAs are traditionally seen to work.	**Influenced** – history. **Influences** – expectations, cynicism, hopes, commitment.	Context/Entering	
How TDC traditionally engaged with Thanet	Examples of how TDC traditionally engage with Thanet.	**Influenced** – history. **Influences** - expectations, cynicism, hopes, commitment	Context/Entering	
How the participants thought EN + TDC saw SHD	Why the participants felt TDC & EN had adopted this approach.	**Influenced** – history, local context. **Influences** – commitment, expectations.	Context	
Implementation	Comments referring to the implementation	**Influenced** – Experience, expectations, interests, false dawns of participation. **Influences** – WTPA, measures of success/benefits.	Product	
Independence/control over process	Comments suggesting that the process was	**Influenced** – contribution gap, history,	Process	

	not completely independent.	expectations, boundaries. **Influences** – ownership, commitment & implementation.		
Influence of lay stakeholders	Examples of lay shds influence over process/products.	**Influenced** – facilitation, boundaries, interests, decision making bodies. **Influences** – ownership, implementation, WTPA.	Product	
Influence of Objective 2	Influence of O2 funding.	**Influenced** – O2 **Influences** – boundaries, expectations, products, participants.	Entering.	
Influence of SHD	Comments referring to the influence SHD was thought to have on what would eventually happen.	**Influenced** – history, perceived reasons for SHD, interests of participants, expectations. **Influences** – perceptions of success, ownership, commitment, implementation.	Product (if it is before the process started then it comes under First thoughts on SHD)	
Influence of broad scope	How the broad topic area **Influenced** the process and its products.			
Influence on relationships between RAs	Statements referring to any change in working relations between RAs	**Influenced** – history/context, their involvement in the process, expectations, contact outside process. **Influences** – future decision making, implementation.	Product	
Invisible products are insufficient	Comments suggesting that shds require substantive products first.	**Influenced** – Stakeholder agendas, reasons for participation, expectations, weakness of the intangibles. **Influences** – measures of success, WTPA, implementation.	Product	
Lack of benefits	Suggestions that the participants have	**Influenced** – expectations, scope, interests, boundaries,	Product	

	experienced little in the way of benefit.	SHD, reasons for part. **Influences** – WTPA, ownership, commitment.		
Lack of commitment/momentum/ communication	Evidence that there is little in the way of commitment from the shds.	**Influenced** – sense of benefits, boundaries, agendas. **Influences** – implementation, future dm, relationship change.	Product	
Learning	Statement referring to (or lack of) learning.	**Influenced** – reasons/interests of participants, process, facilitation. **Influences** – implementation, future dm., benefits.	Product	
Legitimating	Suggestions from participants for the reason for this approach			
Limitations of SHD				
Local concerns	Comments referring to local issues, that participants hoped to resolve using SHD.	**Influenced** – range of stakeholders, broad aims, local focus. **Influences** – expectations, national/local tension.	Entering/context	
Local political context	Descriptions of TDC and local politics.	**Influenced** – history. **Influences** – expectations, perceived reason for SHD, commitment.	Context	
Low expectation of conflict	Statements referring to how local stakeholders saw little opportunity for conflict over MS.	**Influenced** – stakeholder background, understanding of designation. **Influences** – expectations, reasons for participation, any measure of intangibles.	Entering	
Management structure	How the management structure for the process worked.	**Influenced** – decision makers, Habs. D., process design. **Influences** – contribution,	Process/Context	

		ownership, commitment.		
Manipulation	Statements that suggest people saw the process as a means of manipulation.	**Influenced** – MSt., contribution, reasons for participation, history. **Influences** – ownership, WTPA, commitment, benefits, relationship change.	Product	
Matching expectations	Statements acknowledging the challenge of matching expectations.	**Influenced** – understanding of the range of stakeholders.	Context	
Minimal cross network communication	Evidence that SHD struggles to establish communication across established networks	**Influenced** – Strenght of existing networks, the nature of the process, opportunity for extended contact, the range of participants. **Influences** – future dm, changing relationships, learning.	Process and Product.	
Missing stakeholders	Statements referring to absent stakeholders	**Influenced** – expectations of participants, SHD. **Influences** – implementation, success, relevance of MS, effectiveness.	Process	
MS product	Statements referring to the MS.	Depends on statements – good or bad.	Product	
Need to impose process	Statements suggesting that process needed to be imposed on individuals or orgs. To ensure their participation.	**Influenced** – history, local politics, apathy levels, understanding of designation. **Influences** – how people enter the process, what they want from it, and why they are there	Entering/context.	
Normative values of SHD	Recognition of values of SHD.	**Influenced** – individuals awareness and appreciation of less tangible	Product/process	

		elements. **Influences** – Sense of benefit, changes in relationships, implementation, ownership.		
Outputs from the workshops	Description of what the participant identifies as coming out of the process.	**Influenced** – reasons for participation, expectations, understanding of the issues. **Influences** – sense of effectiveness, ownership, benefits, WTPA, criticism.	Products	
Outside process influence	Examples of outside process influence	**Influenced** – management structure, contribution, participant. **Influences** – ownership, manipulation,	Context	
Ownership	Comments referring to the any sense of ownership described or implied by participants	**Influenced** – products, agenda of participant, process & facilitation, expectation, contribution, transparency. **Influences** – WTPA, relationship building, implementation.	Product	
Participation apathy	Evidence of participants showing a tiredness with this approach to DM.	**Influenced** – previous experience, opportunities presented by SHD, relevance of their agenda, sense of contribution. **Influences** – sense of benefit, contributions, implementation & ownership.	Product/process	
Perceived EN priorities	What EN's priorities were thought to be.	**Influenced** – history, understanding of Habs D., reasons for participation, the focus of the process. **Influences** – commitment, relevance of participation, sense of manipulation.	Entering/process	

Perceived understanding of stakeholder's aims	Examples of what the RAs thought local shds were after.	**Influenced** – aims & boundaries, local awareness, communication. **Influences** – invited stakeholders, mis-matched process/expectations.	Entering	
Perception of importance				
Perceived TDC priorities	What TDC's priorities were thought to be.	**Influenced** – history, understanding of Habs D., reasons for participation, the focus of the process. **Influences** – commitment, relevance of participation, sense of manipulation.	Entering/process	
Political reasoning for participation	Examples of how the participants saw local politics as the reasoning behind the use of SHD.			
Positive comments on process	Positive statements regarding the process.	**Influenced** – the process, facilitation, expectations, contribution, appreciation of normative values of this approach. **Influences** – benefits, sense of contribution, WTPA, understanding of other participants.	Process	
Positive outputs of process				
Post SHD requirements	What is needed after the launch of the MS to ensure it is effective.	**Influenced** – strength of benefits, believe in SHD products, a cynicism, ownership, work of TC. **Influences** – commitment to DIPs	Product	

Potential of the process	Comments suggesting that the process perhaps did not fulfill its potential.	**Influenced** – hopes/expectations of participant, weakness in the follow up by TDC, restrictive nature of boundaries. **Influences** – disappointment, frustration, WTPA, measures of success and effectiveness.	Entering/product	
Potential to influence MS				
Power	Examples of how power was seen to change within the process and influence the products.	**Influenced** – the management structure, the commitment of the DMs, the participatory process. **Influences** – perceptions of influence (contribution), manipulation, ownership.	Process	
Problem of idea generation	Statements that refer to the potential for unfulfilled ideas.	**Influenced** – boundaries, commitment of DM, expectations. **Influences** – disappointment, manipulation, ownership.	Product	
Process capture	Statements suggesting the process was dominated by one subject area.	**Influenced** – boundaries, decision makers, facilitation, expectations of participants. **Influences** – sense of benefits, relevance, contribution.	Process	
Process engaging with wider DM	How the process did/did not engage with wider DM.	**Influenced** – representative nature, commitment of DM. **Influences** – success of process, implementation.	Process	
Promotion of area	Statements referring to the promotion of the area as a desired product.	**Influenced** – Broad aims, expectations, stakeholders present. **Influences** –	Product	

		expectations, hopes, frustrations, reasons for participation.		
RA commitment to process and products	Comments referring to how committed the RAs appeared to be	**Influenced** – levels of participation. **Influences** – Believe in process, commitment, contribution and implementation	Process	
Reasons for stakeholder participation	What was the reason for the shd's involvement.	**Influenced** – background of participants, aims of process. **Influences** – expectations, ideas, hopes.	Entering	
Process focus is important				
Relevance of stakeholder input	How relevant was the various shd's input.	**Influenced** – boundaries, decision makers. **Influences** – frustration, ownership, contribution, challenge of idea generation.	Process	
Representation	Comments referring to the representative requirement of SHD	**Influenced** – depends what is said. **Influences** - depends	Process	
Resistance to participation	Statements describing how either the participant was resistant to the idea of the context was.	**Influenced** – context, commitment of DM, cynicism. **Influences** – commitment, effectiveness of process.	Entering/Context	
Resistance to the idea of participation				
Response to invitation	How the participant felt on being invited to the process.	**Influenced** – expectations, interests, thoughts on DIPS, and the local decision makers. **Influences** – commitment.	Entering (root)	
Risks of participation	Statements identifying the risks the participants identify.	**Influenced** – Commitment, understanding of the process, outputs, ownership. **Influences** – commitment,	Process	

		expectations.		
Role of Diana Pound	Descriptions of the role DP played	**Influenced** – **Influences -**	Process	
SHD is not enough	Comments suggesting that simply using SHD is not sufficient to ensure effective results.	**Influenced** – Expectations, TC, stakeholder agendas. **Influences** – commitment to process, WTPA	Product	
SHD was the only way	Statements suggesting that SHD was the only way to ensure the MS was produced.	**Influenced** – understanding of context, background of shd. **Influences** – commitment, ownership, relationships.	Product	
SHD wasn't necessary	Statements suggesting that the MS didn't require SHD.	**Influenced** – Thoughts on participation, power, appreciation of context. **Influences** – commitment to process.	Product	
Southern Water participation	Comments about involvement of SW.			
Spin-off SHD actions	Actions taken by participant related to this project since the launch.	**Influenced** – commitment, ownership, boundaries, interests. **Influences** – implementation, relationships.	Product	
Stakeholder Dialogue techniques	Reference to the SHD techniques.	**Influenced** – **Influences-**		
Statements of success and support	How successful did the participants feel the process was.	**Influenced** – expectations, benefits experienced, reasons for participation. **Influences** – relationships, WTPA, future DM.	Product	
Substantive changes	Description of changes on the ground resulting from the process	**Influenced** – awareness, interests. **Influences** – benefits, ownership.	Product	
Support for products of SHD				

Surprise over outcomes	Statements suggesting surprise (lack of) regarding products.	**Influenced** – expectations, commitment. **Influences**, WTPA, ownership, relationships.	Product	
TDC commitment to process				
TDC competence	Comments referring to TDC's ability to deal with the designation.	**Influenced** – interest of participant, history. **Influences** – commitment, contribution.	Context.	
TDC understanding of participation	Examples of how and why TDC regard participation as being of use.		Context	
TDC's green commitment	Describing TDC's appreciation of green issues.	**Influenced** – interest of participants, history. **Influences** – commitment, reasoning for process.	Context	
Transferable benefits?	Do participants think the benefits are transferable?		Product	
Turner Centre	Comments referring to TC		Product	
Uncertainty regarding intangibles	Describes how there is uncertainty as to whether the process produced the desired intangibles.	**Influenced** – strength, focus on substantive. **Influences** – future DM, relationship building.	Product	
Unpredicted products	Outcomes that were not stated objectives.	**Influenced** – broad scope, range of participants, nature of participation. **Influences** – expectations, implementation	Product	
Use of management scheme				
Weak consensus	Statements suggesting that agreements formed in the process are not very strong – they may be tested in the	**Influenced** – commitment of DM, power of SHD. **Influences** – future dm, relationships, implementation	Product	

	future.			
Weakness of process	Comments referring to how the process may have been seen to fail.		Process	
Who benefited most?	Who did the participant feel benefited most from the SHD approach	**Influenced** – Expectations, contributions, management structure, outputs, implementation. **Influences** – WTPA, reputations, relationships, ownership.	Product	
Why was SHD used	Why did the participant think SHD was used.	**Influenced** – awareness, interest of participant. **Influences** – expectations, level of commitment, ownership.	Entering	
Willingness to participate again	Comments on whether the participant is willing to participate again.	**Influenced** – experience, benefits. **Influences** – future DM, relationships with DM and the development of cross network communication	Product	

Appendix M

Job advert for Coastal Wildlife Project Officer May 2001

THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

PERSON SPECIFICATION (2001)

	Coastal Park Project Officer		
	Community Services		AmenityManagement
	Local Scale 5/7		19-21 Harbour Street Ramsgate

ESSENTIAL:

1. To be a Graduate with a degree in a relevant subject and have at least five years experience in this field, with a proven track record of developing nature conservation projects – preferably coastal.
2. To possess an understanding of Coastal Recreational Activities and current tourism policies.
3. To be experienced in project management and bidding for funding, both domestic and European.
4. To have good communication and negotiating skills and to have or be expected to learn facilitation skills.
5. To have excellent report writing skills using plain English.
6. To be a creative thinker, prepared to undertake a challenge and be able to enthuse and motivate others.
7. To have experience of working on own initiative.
8. To be computer literate and familiar with GIS, word processing and database management.
9. To have interpretational and promotional skills.
10. To be prepared to relocate to the Thanet area and be able to drive.

Guidance Notes for Candidates

In order to assist in the shortlisting process, it would be appreciated if you would identify the extent to which you meet the essential and desirable characteristics for the post.

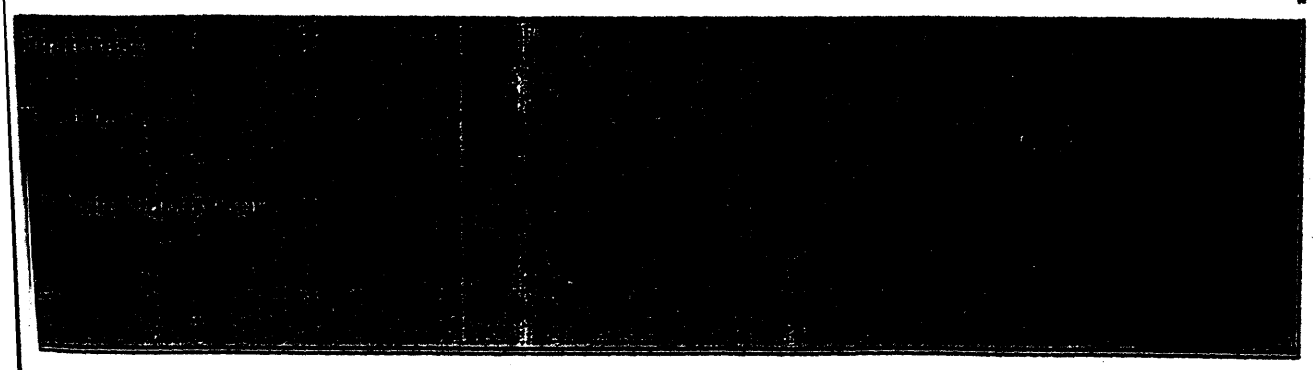
Whilst you may submit a CV in support of your application, please note that the application form itself must be completed in full.

It is regretted that separate notification cannot be given to candidates not included on the shortlist for interview. Therefore, if no invitation is received from Thanet District Council within two weeks of the closing date, candidates must assume that their application has been unsuccessful.

The closing date for applications is Tuesday 29th May 2001.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To assist local recreation groups to produce, follow and monitor the effectiveness of agreed codes of conduct.
2. To produce regular newsletters and other interpretational materials.
3. To raise the profile and awareness of the nature conservation value of the coast.
4. To assist the Tourism Development Manager in the development and promotion of green tourism (including educational trips to the area).
5. To work with the Council's Arts Development Officer to promote an appreciation of the coastline and its flora and fauna via the Arts.
6. To establish a detailed database including the mapping of current Recreational activities and to measure levels of usage.
7. To provide a central point of contact for specialist nature conservation advice about coastal wildlife and activities.
8. To act as a co-ordinator for the North East Kent Marine Site Management Group.
9. To liaise with National and regional bodies to co-ordinate bids and secure partnership funding.
10. To identify and realise sponsorship for various coastal nature conservation activities.
11. To represent the Council as required to maximise the coastal nature conservation development programme for Thanet.
12. To prepare and monitor, manage and control finance estimates, budgets and accounts relative to the nature conservation programme and action plan, funding bids and other financial tasks as required.
13. To prepare and present reports to the various committees of the Council and Management Steering Group as may be required from time to time.
14. To undertake any other additional duties as may be required from time to time, at the discretion of the Head of Amenity Management, which are commensurate with the level of responsibility and range of duties associated with this post.
15. To have the normal responsibilities for health and safety that applies to all employees.



Appendix N

Written comments received from participants in the Thanet Stakeholder Dialogue process.

[redacted]

CONFIDENTIAL

To: Members Only.

Having been requested for some feedback on the workshops (Thanet Coast an Asset for all) I felt compelled to write this response. Unfortunately it is somewhat negative and for this I apologize, but I believe honesty is the best policy. I have only been in Thanet for four and a half years, having come down from Manchester. I was delighted at the beautiful coastline that this part of Kent had, especially as Margate had been awarded the Blue Flag for it's clean beach. The beach at Blackpool with which I had been familiar was no comparison, at the risk of sounding coarse it was a common northern joke that if you stepped over the shit you could go bathe in the sea. Needless to say I never took my children paddling there. However, I would have had no such reservations on any of the beaches I have visited in Thanet until recently.

Bearing in mind I was attending the workshops in my capacity as President of the [redacted] I brought up the subject at our recent Association meeting and asked other hoteliers for their views. Many voiced their concern over the detrimental effect that the recent pollution of Margate seawater could have on tourism. Apparently the televised report was quite damming (I myself had missed this report, so can only give the information I received second hand). However, the problem appeared to be of irresponsible builders allowing raw sewage to be discarded into a brook at Tivoli that leads into the sea. Some say that they were given permission to do so.

Another bugbear was insufficient removal of seaweed from our beaches, which leads to bad smells permeating the area on numerous occasions. This I can confirm as I have, on several occasions, been told by my guests of the stench coming from stagnant seaweed.

Insufficient removal of refuse by the council, along with a complacent lack of enforcing bye-laws has resulted in a regular problem of seagulls raiding rubbish sacks left out for collection days before they are due for collection. This is obviously a health risk but I would imagine it to be against the natural role of the seagull, as normally they would have to hunt for their prey.

Overall we have been unimpressed by the lack of progress made by the 'Thanet Coast an Asset' project. I myself lost interest and enthusiasm part way through the course, so rather than waste more of my valuable time during my busy season, I ceased attending meetings. I did however request that I be kept informed of any further developments. This in all fairness was followed up, and I did receive bulletins on a fairly regular basis.

Generally speaking though, I came to the conclusion that the project was mainly a paper exercise (jobs for the boys etc) with vast amounts of money being wasted on expensive workshops and the production of glossy leaflets which, by themselves though very nice to look at, did not warrant the time, effort and money being spent on them. Nevertheless I have distributed these to my guests, by placing them in their rooms along with other promotional leaflets on places of interest etc.

Once again I do apologize that I cannot be more positive on this issue because I feel that tourism and the beauty of nature is a subject that is close to my heart. Sadly I feel that the people of Thanet do not appreciate the beauty of the area and it's great potential.

I would appreciate it if you would keep this observation response confidential.

[redacted] (President).

An assessment of participatory decision making:
The Thanet Coast 'An asset for all' workshops.

1. What did you think of the participatory workshops? Do you think they were a success and if so why?

Very Useful. and successful.
Well organised, no restrictions on opinions and well directed and focussed
A place where different organisations could air their views and each views

2. What was your understanding of the aims of the workshops?

To identify different interests involved with the coast. Bring together representatives
Formulate a management scheme to protect resitatue and regenerate the coast

3. What did you and those you represented hope to gain from your participation?

Wider Knowledge of what goes on at the coast. What trends are harmful in the long term

4. How did the workshops benefit you and the group you were representing?

Made us part of a team, reinforcing previous contacts.
Gave some people to our organisation

5. Who do you feel benefited most from the workshops and why?

The actual process used to bring together opinions and fact onto guidelines for coastal management
Information of environmental assets around Thanets Coastline

6. What products of the workshops are you aware of?

Management Scheme
Consultation Process being used as an example elsewhere in UK (according to English Nature)
Employment of a coastal officer (TDC/English Nature)

7. How do you feel you have contributed to the products of the workshops?

There is a tendancy for participants to become too focused on their particular concern or opinion. Hopefully I helped to dilute this with other ideas gained from living in Thanet and working with other groups

8. What is your opinion of participatory workshops since your involvement in these four?

Excellent way to gain an idea of peoples views and concerns.
Still not all people were represented as meetings in daytime. Possibly questionnaires could have been sent out to non participants to enforce views expressed at workshops.

P.T.O

The Management scheme
is important not only as an everyday
process for maintenance of the coastal zones
and regeneration. but as a buffer against
proposed development.

Thanet is a builders/developers paradise
Internally over the last years huge developments
supermarkets / housing have eroded much of
the green areas (urban sprawl).
This will have a knock on effect to the coast.
Already the old hotels are being replaced
by huge hotel complexes.
The consultation process and its offshoots could
provide another weapon to protect the coast
and direct development or tourism to certain
areas.

Appendix O

Participant comments collected at the end of the final Stakeholder Dialogue workshop and presented by Pound (1999).

EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

As one final exercise, people were asked to reflect on the four workshops as a whole and to do so in two ways:

- First, they were asked to take some post-its and note down what they thought had been the Strengths of the process and its Weaknesses. These were then placed on large sheets and some quick grouping undertaken to draw out main points. The first material after this introduction is the write-up of all the post-it comments.

- Secondly, they were asked to revisit a question we asked at Workshop 1, about whether they felt their involvement would - or, by now, had - made a difference to the Management Scheme and coastal projects. In this case they simply ticked along a graded line from 'not at all' to 'very much'. The chart shown here is a summary, not showing every single mark (see photographs for the actual sheet).

Strengths

- It was good to see young people at these forums. They are our future.
- Opportunity/encouragement for every view to be expressed.
- Objective driven.
- Syncitial action - stimulation of one part of the group activates the whole group; ideas are born.
- Range of views.
- Co-ownership approach.
- Lots of ideas/viewpoints.
- Raised hopes for the area.
- Inclusiveness.
- Wide sharing / contribution of information and opinion.
- 10 out of 10.
- The concept of a Thanet Coastal Park.
- Food for thought and passing on.
- Wide sharing/contribution of information and opinion.
- Lots of involvement.
- Broadens perceptions of all interested parties.
- Consensus of opinion.
- Bringing together a diverse community of people.
- Cover a lot of ground in 4 days!
- Discovering who's who in Thanet.
- Very democratic.
- Collating ideas.
- Sharing knowledge.
- Increases the potential 'pot' of ideas.
- Positive 'get things done' attitude.
- It may work.
- Nice to see some young representatives taking part for the future.
- Knowledge gained.
- Well organised - Many ideas thrown up, many valuable Lots of innovative methods.
- Better informed process.

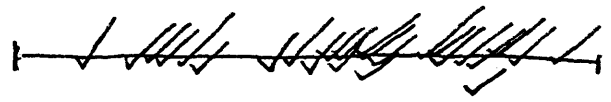
- Everybody's voice gets heard.
- Lots of groups.
- Very good food.
- The workshops have got better as they've gone on.
- Lots of involvement.
- It may work.
- Good mix of groups / voices.
- The arrangements for moving round were more interesting.
- Interesting exercise.
- Ability to reach general consensus by often disparate groups.
- Barriers / biases / perceptions changed.
- Opportunity to meet with others with "like minded views" to put Thanet on the map for its residents and those outside.
- Community involvement.
- Useful networking.
- meeting other interested parties.
- Very useful system - allowing person inputs.
- Positive and in parts puzzling! But progressing.
- Participants have been able to appreciate the needs/views of other parties involved.
- More hope, now, of a better Thanet coast.
- Good contacts with other groups. Spread of ideas.
- Training!
- Various groups brought together. Possible creation of conservation post.
- Informative re. others' views / needs.
- People with wide variety of interests and experience meeting and sharing. Consensus building through group interaction.
- "Small" voice able to express their views in informal groups and friendly atmosphere.
- Mix of people - even if diverse. Learning of the problems of other organisations in Thanet.
- Excellent.
- Cross-fertilisation.
- Good to have representatives from so many groups.
- "OWNERSHIP" of ideas by local people. Should help compared with imposing schemes.
- Maximum involvement and commitment.
- Better appreciation of other local groups.
- Facilitators very good at resolving/addressing conflicts of interests - keeps everyone happy.
- Wide approach.
- Free speaking.
- Meet people of varying interests and learn of common base.
- Very inclusive.
- Good cross section of individuals / organisations involved.

Weaknesses

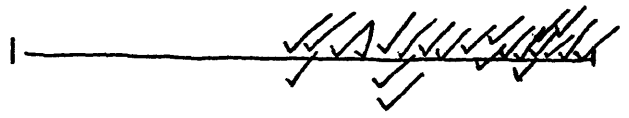
- Vast amount to deal with.
- Length of time taken.
- Uncertainty about way forward having agreed on goals.
- Hearing facilities could be improved.
- Sometimes in the groups it was difficult to get 'on task' since some people had a rather blinkered view of their own vested interests.

- Long winded process.
- Some people's pet hates - nothing to do with scheme.
- Funding (lack of it).
- Funding?
- Too many diverse interests. Too much paper.
- Management plan too detailed / legalistic for general understanding - more time required to explain legal and scientific necessities.
- Women councillors too bossy.
- Some repetition.
- Can be side-tracked.
- Negativity of resident population.
- Funding?
- Somewhat long-winded.
- Lot of variables - some cross referencing in tables not relevant.
- Funding enforcement.
- Mostly specialised activities - not enough general ones!
- provision of background information sometimes?
- Risk of superficial coverage.
- Long route to make a point or explanation.
- Need to keep focused at times.
- Enforcement! Will lead to more rules and regulations!
- Some individuals use workshop to promote opinions on specific developments, e.g. wastewater treatment works, when the scheme is to address all of the designated area.
- T.D.C. who could make a difference not present.
- Interval between meetings slowed momentum.
- difficult for my brain to take it all in.
- Lack of experience.
- Perhaps more people should have voiced their opinions.
- May be in a group with dominant interest.
- Some aspects seem to be inadequately researched.
- More emphasis on marine conservation.
- Unlikeliness of TDC taking all this on board.
- Sometimes we got stuck on one not very important topic.
- Certain inaccuracies have been perpetrated, e.g. with respect to bait gathering.
- Specialists too narrow minded.

At end of workshop 1



not at all very much



At end of workshop 4

5.3 Feed back on strengths and weaknesses of the workshops

At the end of workshop 4 each participant was given 5 post it notes and asked to give 5 views on what they thought of the process and then place them on a board for either strengths or weaknesses. They were told not to put all five as negatives! There were 72 strengths recorded compared to 38 weaknesses.

The strengths and weaknesses could be grouped under the following:

Strengths

- General positive comments
- Democracy/Inclusiveness/being heard
- Meeting others
- Sharing knowledge information and ideas
- Broadening perspectives - understanding others
- Future hopes
- Content of the scheme

In the description of Consensus Building in section 3.0, I wrote that 'The techniques encourage people to step down from adversarial positions and identify their needs and wants, share information, work synergisticly, forge new partnerships , remove prejudice and misunderstanding, develop an appreciation of others concerns and find win/win actions and decisions' This text came from the funding bid made before the workshops started. The comments by participants were made at the end of the process and it is noteworthy how much their comments confirm that this had indeed been their experience.

Weaknesses

- Breadth - too complex
- Time - too long
- The Future - worries
- Working with others - difficulties of keeping to task
- Content of the scheme
- Practical

Their actual comments have been copied in Appendix 1.

Appendix P

An example of the interview schedule used for the Wash and North Norfolk interviews.

Advisory Group interview schedule

Background

- Please could you tell me a little about yourself, what is your interest in this coastline?
- Have you been involved in anything like this in the past?
- Please could you tell me how you came to be involved in the AG.
- What were your expectations on joining the AG?
- What did you hope to get from participating?

General

- What do you think the role of the AG was in the process of producing the MS?
- How do you think the AG contributed to the MS?
- To what extent do you feel you were presented with a 'blank sheet of paper' when you started out?
- Who do you feel had the greatest influence over the products from the process?
- Did the AG process allowed you to discuss your concerns and interests regarding the coastline?
- How happy are you with what has come out of the participatory process?
- How have you benefited from participating in the AG?
- Did participating in this process encourage you to become involved in anything similar? Why do you think this is?
- How would you like to see the process run in the future, what should be different?

Substantive

- What products from the process are you aware of?
- What do you think of the MS?
- Are you involved in the implementation of the MS in any way?
- Do you foresee there being any obstacles to the successful implementation of the MS?

- How different are the products of the process to what you might have expected from a consultation exercise?

- What costs did you experience in participating in the AG?

Intangible

- Where within the process do you think the decisions were made?

- What have you learnt from being a member of the AG?

- Has your opinion of any organisations or individuals changed as a result of participating?

⇒ What did you learn about the people who weren't in your AG, the members of the FMG and the CMG?

- Has your participation changed your relationship with any of the other AG members?

- What contact do you still have with the other members of the AG?

- Do you feel the process gave you an opportunity to meet decision makers?